Optional Practical Training (OPT) 24-Month STEM Extension Tutorial

Berkeley International Office (BIO)  
2299 Piedmont Avenue  
Berkeley, CA 94720  
(510) 642-2818  
http://internationaloffice.berkeley.edu
Tutorial Outline

- **Slides 3-4**: STEM Eligibility & Allowable Employment
- **Slides 5-6**: Special Cases for Students Transitioning from 17-24-Month STEM Extensions
- **Slide 7**: Application Process Overview
- **Slides 8-12**: BIO STEM I-20 Request Process & Required Documents
- **Slides 13-34**: Submitting the 24-Month Extension request to USCIS & Supporting Documents
- **Slides: 35-38**: Your USCIS I-797 Receipt Notice & EAD
- **Slides 39-45**: Maintaining Your F-1 Status & STEM Reporting Requirements
- **Slides 46-47**: Frequently Asked Questions: Employment & Travel
Are you eligible for the 24-month OPT STEM Extension?

Requirements:

- You must be a recipient of a U.S. Bachelor’s, Master’s or Doctoral degree in a STEM (science, technology, engineering, or math) designated degree program. See this list of STEM Majors. (You can check the CIP code listed on your I-20.)
- You are currently authorized for 12-month OPT and have not exceeded 90 days of unemployment.
- Can apply based on any previous STEM degree from an SEVP, accredited U.S. institution within the last 10 years
- Employed or have a job offer related to your field of study from an employer who is registered in the USCIS E-Verify Program. Must complete Form I-983 with employer and all employers must have an EIN number.
- Your employer can work with you to fully complete the Form I-983 and abide by all employer obligations, including Dept. of Homeland Security Site visits.
- You are applying no more than 90 days before your 12-month OPT expires and no later than the expiration of your 12-month OPT.

Two 24-month STEM extensions may be granted per lifetime.
Types of Allowable Employment

• Volunteer/Unpaid positions and self employment are NOT supported by the 24-Month OPT STEM Extension.

• **STEM-eligible employers** must have e-Verify & EIN numbers and the student must have a "bona fide employer-employee relationship".

• If a student uses a temporary or staffing agency to place them in a training opportunity, the agency cannot complete and sign the [Form I-983](#). Only the E-verified employer that provides the actual training relevant to the student’s qualifying STEM degree is authorized to sign and complete the Form I-983.

• If a student uses a temporary agency that places them in short-term training opportunities with several different employers, the student will need to complete a new Form I-983 for every new training opportunity with each employer.
In May 2016, the STEM Extension changed from 17 to 24 months. F-1s applying for or with approved 17-Month Extensions had the following transition options:

- **RFE Transition to 24 Month Application**: Your 17-Month application was still pending with USCIS after May 10, 2016. If you have received a Request for Evidence, see the next slide for instructions.

- **7-Month Extension**: The new STEM rule allowed some eligible F-1 students on approved 17-Month Extensions to apply for an additional 7 months only from May 10- August 8, 2016. This additional 7-Month Extension application period has ended.

If you are currently on a 17-Month STEM Extension and were not eligible or did not apply to transition to a 24-Month STEM Extension, you can continue to follow the 17-Month STEM regulations until the completion of your 17-Month STEM EAD. Please review the [17-Month STEM Tutorial](#) for more information regarding 17-Month STEM obligations.
RFE Transition to 24-Month STEM
(You have a 17-month STEM Extension which is still pending after May 10, 2016)

1. USCIS will issue a Request for Further Evidence (RFE) asking for an I-20 with 24-Month OPT STEM recommendation. You will receive this in the mail sometime after May 10, 2016.

2. To request your I-20, submit a [BIO 24 Month STEM application with 1) a copy of your RFE and 2) Form I-983]. BIO will issue a new I-20 with 24-Month OPT STEM recommendation.

3. You will submit your RFE and new I-20 with 24-Month OPT STEM recommendation to USCIS. Be sure to follow ALL instructions in the RFE, including deadlines, mailing and documentation requirements.
Application Process Overview

1. **Request OPT STEM I-20 from Berkeley International Office.**
   
   The I-20 will be ready for pick up 3 business days after submitting the [OPT 24 Month STEM application](#) and all supporting documents to Berkeley International Office. Arrangements can be made to send you the new I-20 by mail. Please allow enough time for mailing. USCIS must receive your application within 60 days of BIO recommending you.

2. **Prepare, collect & mail your application materials to USCIS.**

   Allow approximately 1 week to gather and organize your materials for mailing. A complete application must be received by USCIS before the end date of your current OPT as noted on the EAD card. You must be in the United States to file the OPT STEM application with USCIS.


   Average processing time at the United States Citizenship and Immigrations Services (USCIS) is 90 days. However, you may continue to work on OPT for up to 180 days while the STEM application is pending.

4. **Maintain your F-1 status while on OPT STEM Extension.**

   You must report general address and employer updates to Berkeley International Office within 10 days of any change. 24 Month STEM Extension students must also submit a validation report every six months and training evaluations each 12 months. Find information about STEM Reporting [here](#). Your I-20 travel endorsement is valid for only 6 months while on OPT STEM. Failure to provide timely updates may result in termination of the F-1 record.
**Step 1: Request OPT STEM I-20**

1. **Log in to the Student SEVIS Update (SSU) system DIRECTLY BEFORE you submit your STEM application to BIO.** (Most processing delays are due to failure to update all new required fields in SSU.) You must:
   - Update all current & previous OPT employment
   - Update your current address/email/phone
   - Upload a copy of your OPT EAD
   - Upload a copy of **form I-983 Training Plan**.

2. **Complete the OPT 24 Month STEM Extension Form** and submit to International Office with Post-Completion Services Fee payment. Attach $300 check or money order made payable to “UC Regents”.

3. Submit the completed form by mail or in-person with check or money order and supporting documents to: **Berkeley International Office, 2299 Piedmont Ave., Berkeley, CA 94720-2321**. Please contact internationaloffice@berkeley.edu with questions regarding submitting the form.

**Application Deadline**

- USCIS must receive your application before the end date of your OPT.
- BIO recommends that you submit your STEM I-20 request at least 2 weeks before your current OPT EAD expires.
- You may apply as early as 90 days before your OPT EAD end date.
- **Special Cases:** Students with e Request for Evidence from USCIS must be careful to apply by the RFE deadline

* Your OPT will be automatically extended for 180 days while your OPT STEM application is pending.
Complete Form I-983

The formal training plan must clearly articulate the OPT STEM learning objectives and affirm the employer’s commitment to helping you achieve those objectives. To fulfill this requirement, you and your employer must complete and sign Form I-983 and then submit pages 1-4 to BIO.

For more information, including a detailed tutorial and instructions see: https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/form-i-983-overview

Pages 3-4 contain the details of the required Training Plan to be determined by you and your employer. To avoid rejection of your application, think carefully about each question and answer fully and completely. Imagine this is an essay exam to be graded- have you and your employer addressed all parts of each question, clearly and specifically?
Complete I-983

We’ve filled in UC Berkeley’s information.

BUT- If you are applying for the STEM Extension for a prior degree (you checked “yes” below), list the name of the school you obtained that degree. You can find your school code on page 1 of your previous school’s I-20.

Please write in the contact information of our SEVIS Coordinator here

Six digit code (XX.XXXX) found on your I-20.
- Page 3 if you have an I-20 issued before 6/26/15
- Page 1 if you have an I-20 issued on/after 6/26/2015

Check “yes” ONLY if your STEM degree is NOT the degree listed on your UC Berkeley 12-Month OPT I-20.

---

### SECTION 1: STUDENT INFORMATION (Completed by Student)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name (Surname/Primary Name, Given Name):</th>
<th>Student Email Address:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bear, Oski</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Oski@email.com">Oski@email.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of School Recommending STEM OPT:</th>
<th>Name of School Where STEM Degree Was Earned:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of California, Berkeley</td>
<td>University of California, Berkeley</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designated School Official (DSO) Name and Contact Information:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James Scott Robinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2299 Piedmont Ave, Berkeley, CA 94720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>510-642-2818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:SEVISCoordinator@berkeley.edu">SEVISCoordinator@berkeley.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: Computer Science, 11.0701</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level/Type of Qualifying Degree:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.e. Bachelors, Masters, PhD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Awarded: (mm-dd-yyyy):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Based on Prior Degree?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Authorization Number:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“USCIS number” listed on your 12-Month OPT EAD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One day after current EAD ends</th>
<th>24 months from STEM start date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.e.: 01/01/2017</td>
<td>i.e.: 01/01/2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BIO STEM Post-Completion Services Fee

Check, money order or cashier’s check for $300

Be sure that your name and student ID are on the check.
The OPT STEM Extension I-20

You will use the following information when completing the Form I-765 (part of your application materials):

**Page 1 of I-20:** Program of Study Section: Your SEVIS degree name and “CIP” Code (circled)

**What are CIP Codes?** Classification of Instructions Programs (CIP) codes are published by the National Center for Education Statistics (NES) & are used by SEVIS to designate a student’s major. Your CIP code determines whether your major has been designated as a STEM degree.

**Page 2 of I-20:** STEM Recommendation & Employer Name

OPT STEM applications must be received by USCIS no later than **60 days after this date**. Please see an advisor at BIO if there are concerns that the application will not arrive on time.

---

The new travel endorsement is valid **6 months**. Consult with a BIO advisor if you need to travel while your STEM EAD is still pending.
Step 2: Prepare, collect, & mail your USCIS application materials

2. Gather all required documentation and copies
3. Mail the complete application packet to USCIS. You are required to be physically present in the U.S. to mail the application.
The I-765 is required to submit the OPT STEM Extension application to the USCIS. A sample I-765 form is shown here. Form I-765 can be downloaded from the USCIS web site.

**Important:** Use the most current version of the I-765. It is best to download the I-765 before mailing the application since the USCIS updates forms frequently.

Completing the I-765 is a simple task, but some items can be confusing. The following slides will help you complete those “tricky” questions.
Completing Form I-765 for STEM OPT

**Top Portion**
Check the box for “Renewal of my permission to accept employment.”

**Item #1: Name**
Your entire family name should be in CAPITAL letters. Use upper & lower case for the first name.

**Item #3: Address in the United States**
This is where you would like the Receipt Notice and the EAD card to be mailed.

- The address needs to be valid for *at least 3 months*, the length of time it will take to process the application.
- **DO NOT USE THE C/O NOTATION IF YOU USE YOUR OWN ADDRESS.** If you have plans to move during this time, use a reliable friend or family member’s address to receive the EAD. If your name is not registered at the address, you must use the **C/O notation and the name of the friend of family member who lives at the address** to ensure delivery. If you fail to use this notation, the card will be returned to the Service Center as undeliverable.
Step 2: Prepare and Mail the OPT Application

Completing Form I-765 for STEM OPT

Item #10: I-94 Number
Use your current I-94 number. This is an 11-digit number found on the top left corner of the paper Form I-94 card or on the electronic I-94 record. Alien Registration Numbers are not issued to F-1 students.

Item #11: Previous Employment Authorization
Check “yes.”
Complete the information based on your 12-month EAD. If you have been authorized for other employment through USCIS, be sure to include that information in this section as well. Use a separate piece of paper if necessary. If you aren’t sure which USCIS office you applied to, check with your BIO advisor.
Include a photocopy of your EAD card with your application.
Completing Form I-765 for STEM OPT

**Item #12: Date of Last Entry into the U.S.**
Date of the most recent entry into the U.S. The entry date can be found stamped on the paper form I-94 card or passport admission stamp.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12. Date of Last Entry into the U.S., on or about (mm/dd/yyyy)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08/27/2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Item #13: Place of Last Entry into the U.S.**
Name of the city where you last entered the U.S. The information is on the paper Form I-94 card or passport admission stamp (usually as a code, i.e. “SFR” for San Francisco). If you drove across the border, write the name and the city where you entered the U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>13. Place of Last Entry into the U.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SFR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Item #14: Manner of Last Entry**
Status you received when entering the U.S. If you entered the U.S. with an I-20 as a student write, “F-1 Student”. If you initially entered with an H-1B work visa, for example, and then changed status to F-1 in the U.S, you would write “H-1B.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>14. Status at Last Entry (B-2 Visitor, F-1 Student, No Lawful Status, etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F-1 Student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Completing Form I-765 for STEM OPT

**Item #15: Current Immigration Status**
Current status should be “F-1 student.” If not, talk to a BIO advisor.

**Item #16: Eligibility Category**
Use the following code for OPT STEM Extension: (c) (3) (C)

**Item #17: 17-Month Extension & E-Verify Information**

- **Degree**: Indicate here the SEVIS degree name as it appears on your I-20. Also include the CIP Code found next to your degree name.
  - If you qualify for the OPT STEM extension based on your 2nd major, you must also include the name of this major and its CIP code.
  - You cannot qualify based on a minor.

- **Employer’s Name as listed in E-Verify**: Your employer should be able to provide you with this information.

- **Employer’s E-Verify Company Identification Number**: Your employer should be able to provide you with this information.
  - For more information about the E-Verify program, see http://www.uscis.gov/e-verify

---

**15. Current Immigration Status** (Visitor, Student, etc.)

- **F-1 Student**

**16. Eligibility Category.** Go to the “Who May File Form I-765?” section of the Instructions. In the space below, place the letter and number of the eligibility category you selected from the instructions. For example, (a)(8), (c)(17)(iii), etc.

| C | 3 | C |

**17. (c)(3)(C) Eligibility Category.** If you entered the eligibility category (c)(3)(C) in Question 16 above, list your degree, your employer's name as listed in E-Verify, and your employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or a valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number in the space below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Major(s) as listed on I-20 &amp; CIP Code</th>
<th>Employer's Name as listed in E-Verify</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or a Valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number</td>
<td>Employer's E-verify Number</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**18. (c)(26) Eligibility Category.** If you entered the eligibility category (c)(26) in Question 16 above, please provide the receipt number of your H-1B principal spouse's most recent Form I-797 Notice of Approval for Form I-129.

Leave this area blank
Completing Form I-765 for STEM OPT

- Sign your name
- Fill in the date of signature
- Fill in your telephone number

**Important!**
*Your signature must be above the line* and fit in the white area of the form. If the signature is too big or touches the text above, your application could be delayed.

Be conservative and use a signature smaller than normal. Please see the example.
Required Documents for USCIS

- 2 U.S. Passport Photos (with name and I-94 number written lightly in pencil on back of each) taken within the past 30 days.
- **USCIS Fee is $410.** Check or Money Order made payable to: “U.S. Department of Homeland Security.”
- Original form I-765. [https://www.uscis.gov/i-765](https://www.uscis.gov/i-765)
- Photocopy of OPT STEM I-20 that was issued by BIO within the past 60 days (page 1-3). Don’t forget to sign it!
- Photocopy of your previous UC Berkeley I-20 showing the initial 12-month OPT.
- Photocopy of current OPT or previous STEM EAD. If you still have the approval notice (Form I-797), attach a copy as well.
- Photocopy of passport biographical page and F-1 visa stamp, if applicable.
- Photocopy of paper Form I-94 (both sides) or electronic I-94 record. (The electronic I-94 record is available ONLY to those with passport admission stamp.)
- Proof of STEM Degree: Final Transcript (Preferred) or Photocopy of your diploma showing the major and degree level that makes you eligible for the STEM Extension.
- **If the OPT STEM Extension is based on a prior degree not listed on your current 12- Month OPT I-20**- include a copy of your I-20 from the previous school. If the I-20 is not available, request a screenshot of your SEVIS record from the previous school, or a letter from your previous International Office.
- **If you have previously had another OPT STEM Extension at another degree level,** include a copy of your previous STEM I-20 and EAD.

No documents need to be submitted for F-2 dependents.
Photo Requirements

The photos required to use for the OPT application must meet the specifications of U.S. style passport photos. To see a full description of these specifications, go to the U.S. Department of State web site.

Passport photos must be 2”x2” and taken within the past 30 days.

Write name and I-94 number lightly on the back of each photo.

USCIS has been examining passport photos more strictly. BIO recommends students have their photos taken professionally.
Check or Money Order for USCIS

- **USCIS Fee is $410.** Check or Money Order should be made payable to: “U.S. Department of Homeland Security.” Money orders can be purchased at banks, post office and some local grocery stores.
  - Make sure a name and address are printed on the check. If the address has changed, that is fine.
    - Do not use “temporary checks” often issued by the bank when opening a new account. These checks have no name or address in the upper left hand corner.
    - In the memo line, write your SEVIS ID number.

Money orders and cashier checks should include the same information as a personal check.
Form G-1145

- This form is free to use.
- Complete it in order to request a text message and/or email when USCIS receives your OPT STEM application and when there are any updates.
- Attach to the top of the OPT application packet.
Form I-765

The **I-765 is required** to submit the OPT STEM Extension application to the USCIS. A sample I-765 form is shown here.

Form I-765 can be downloaded from the [USCIS web site](https://www.uscis.gov/i-765).

**Important:** Use the most current version of the I-765. It is best to download the I-765 before mailing the application since the USCIS updates forms frequently.

BIO does not recommend completing the e-file option of the I-765.

Detailed instructions on completing this form are given in previous slides.
Photocopy of OPT STEM I-20

- OPT STEM Recommendation with requested start and end dates will be on page 3.
- Make sure you sign the I-20 before copying it.
- Copy all 3 pages.
- You must keep the original & send a copy with your OPT STEM application.
- It must be received by USCIS within 60 days of issuance.
Photocopy of 12-month OPT I-20

- Include your current I-20 showing the initial 12-month OPT (older version or newer version of the I-20 will be accepted)
- Copy all three pages
- Keep the original for your records.
Photocopy of Current 12-month EAD and/or previous STEM EADs

- Include a front and back copy of the EAD card.
- Also include Approval Notice that came with the 12-month EAD card, if you received one
Photocopy of Passport and Visa

- Passport biographic page (with photo and passport expiration date).
  - Needs to be valid into the future.

- F-1 visa, if applicable.
  - Can be expired.
Photocopy of I-94 Information

• Can be:
  
  o I-94 electronic record. Visit: [www.cbp.gov/i94](http://www.cbp.gov/i94) to access and print out your I-94 record.

  OR

  o Small, white card stapled into your passport. Include a copy of both sides of the Form I-94, even though the back side may be blank.
Photocopy of Diploma or Official Transcripts

- Your diploma or official transcripts must show the major and degree level that makes you eligible for the STEM extension. Final Transcripts are preferred.
- For information about obtaining your UC diploma if you do not have it, see [http://registrar.berkeley.edu/diplomas.html](http://registrar.berkeley.edu/diplomas.html)
Previous Degrees or Previous STEM Extensions

• If the OPT STEM Extension is based on a prior degree not listed on your current 12-Month OPT, you must also include a copy of your I-20 from the previous school.

• If you have previously had another STEM extension, you must include a copy of your previous STEM I-20.

• If the I-20 is not available, either request 1) a screenshot of your F-1 SEVIS record from the previous school OR 2) a letter from your previous international office stating your name, SEVIS ID, the dates of your attendance, and your STEM major and CIP code.
Application Deadline

USCIS must receive the OPT STEM application:

• No later than 60 days after the OPT STEM I-20 has been issued by Berkeley International Office.
  o The issue date is located next to the advisor’s signature on page 1 of the OPT STEM I-20.

• No later than the end date of your current 12-month as noted by your EAD.

  Please account for mailing time.

• You may apply up to 90 days before your current OPT end date.

  It is recommend that you apply early.
Mailing the OPT STEM Application

Mail Delivery Options

Express Mail (Federal Express, UPS, etc)  

OR

United States Postal Service (USPS)

• BIO recommends FedEx as a reliable option.

• If using USPS, BIO recommends using Priority 1-2 Day service and requesting Certified Mail/Return Receipt service to obtain proof of USCIS receipt.

Where to Mail Your Application

• Use the address of USCIS Service Center that corresponds to the region where you will receive your EAD (the address you listed on Item #3 of your Form I-765).

• You will use a different address depending on whether you choose Express Mail or USPS.

• See the next slide for USCIS Service Center mailing addresses.
# Mailing the OPT STEM Application

If using a mailing address in...

- 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, U.S. Virgin Islands, or West Virginia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mail your application to...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S.P.S.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USCIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO Box 660867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallas, TX 75266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Express Deliveries</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USCIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attn: AOS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2501 S. State Hwy 121 Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suite 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewisville, TX 75067</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mail your application to...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S.P.S.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USCIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO Box 21281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix, AZ 85036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Express Deliveries</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USCIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attn: AOS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820 E Skyharbor Circle S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suite 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix, AZ 85034</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 3: Receiving the EAD

1. I-797 Notice of Action from USCIS
2. If there is a problem...
I-797, Notice of Action

The Receipt Notice of Action (I-797)
You should receive the notice by mail within 2-4 weeks after mailing the OPT STEM application to USCIS. If you do not receive your I-797 within 6 weeks of mailing your application, contact an advisor at Berkeley International Office.

Important points:
• The I-797 Notice of Action is a very important document. If you lose the receipt, there is no way to replace it.
• The I-797 is necessary if you want to inquire about the status of your OPT STEM application

Receipt Number
This is your application case number at the USCIS. Check the status of your case on the USCIS web site at https://www.uscis.gov

Received Date
This is the date when the USCIS begins processing the application. (It may not be the actual the application was received, but it is when the case was entered into the system.)

Address Information
Verify the name and address on the I-765 receipt notice. If it is incorrect, contact BIO immediately.

Contacting USCIS
If you have any problems or questions with the application, please contact a BIO advisor before calling the USCIS Customer Service.

You can also use the USCIS.gov Case Status page to change your I-765 mailing address or submit a case inquiry.
If there is a problem with your application...

- If there is a problem with your application, the USCIS will send you a notice by mail called a “Request for Evidence (RFE).” An RFE does not mean that your application has been rejected. It simply means that you need to send in additional documents before your EAD can be issued.

- Getting an RFE will delay the processing of your application for OPT STEM usually by about one month.

- In some cases, if too many items are missing from your application, the USCIS will return the entire application to you. If this happens, you must make the corrections and send the application before the end date of your 12-month EAD (or your 17-24-Month transition deadline)

- If you receive an RFE because you recently filed for the 17-Month OPT STEM extension, see slides 5-6.

To avoid delays, review your application materials for completeness and sign all the forms before mailing them to the USCIS.
The Employment Authorization Document (EAD)

Average processing time at USCIS is 90 days/3 months. While waiting, keep these things in mind.

- Your F-1 status & employment authorization will be **automatically extended** for up to 180 days while your OPT STEM application is pending. You may work during this time.
- A change in employment will require a new BIO 24-Month STEM request AND a new I-983 with the new employer.
- You must work full time in your field of study while on your OPT STEM Extension.
- You may accumulate up to 150 days of unemployment on OPT STEM inclusive of any time used during 12-month OPT. (Students on 17-Month STEM only have 120 days of unemployment allowed until the final approval of the 24-Month STEM.)
- If you decide to return to school as a full-time student, you must request a transfer or a change of level from Berkeley International Office within 60 days of your EAD expiration date.
Step 4: STEM Reporting Requirements

1. Report updated Address and Employer information within 10 days of any change.
2. Complete 6 Month validation with BIO.
3. Report Material Changes to your I-983 to BIO within 10 days.
4. Annual Evaluation of Student Progress due at 12 and 24 Months

See STEM Reporting Requirements for instructions on how to submit updates, validations, & evaluations.
Reporting your Information

While on OPT STEM, you must update the Berkeley International Office within 10 days of any changes to the following information:

- Your Name
- Your Residential Address
- Your Phone & Email Address
- Employer Name or Address
- Starting or Ending Employment
- Date of departure from the U.S. if you leave prior to OPT STEM end date and want to end your OPT.
- Change of status to another visa category

We recommend saving the website page showing your updated information.

In order to update your information, you will need your UCB Student ID# and SEVIS # (found on your I-20 & starts with N00...).
Changing Employment while on OPT STEM Extension

If you change employers during your 24-Month STEM period, follow these instructions. (If your STEM EAD has not yet been approved by USCIS, contact a BIO advisor for more information.)

1) Log into SSU and do the following:
   • Add the new employer information.
   • Add an end date to your previous employer.
   • Update your address/phone/email.
   • Upload a copy of your STEM EAD.
   • Upload a new I-983 form for the new employer.
   • Upload the Final Evaluation from I-983 page 5 for your previous employer.

2) Submit a new OPT 24-Month STEM Extension request to Berkeley International Office by email to internationaloffice@berkeley.edu or in person- no fee required.
Report Material Changes to Form I-983

Material changes may include, but are not limited to:

- Any change of the employer’s Employer Identification Number, (i.e., the company’s Federal Tax ID number) resulting from a change in the employer’s ownership or structure.
- Any reduction in your compensation that is not tied to a reduction in hours worked.
- Any significant decrease in hours per week that you engage in a STEM training opportunity.
- Changes to the employer’s commitments or your learning objectives as documented on the Form I-983.
- Updated Material Changes via a revised I-983 needs to be submitted to BIO within 10 business days.
6 Month Validation

• STEM OPT students must submit a validation report to BIO every six months starting from the date the 24-month extension begins and ending when the student's F-1 status ends.

• 3 validations in total over 24-month OPT STEM Extension time.

• Your F-1 record may be terminated if you fail to report each 6 months.

• Check your STEM start date and mark your calendar for each 6 month interval of your STEM Extension for your reporting deadlines. (Example: Your STEM Extension Starts January 1, 2017. You must submit 6 month validations on July 1, 2017, on January 1, 2018, on July 1 2018 and on Jan 1, 2019.)

• Be sure to check email reminders from BIO
Annual Evaluation

• You must submit Form I-983 page 5 “Evaluation of Student Progress” to BIO each 12 months and/or any time you leave an employer.
• Your employer must review and sign the self evaluation to attest to the accuracy.
• Your F-1 record may be terminated if you fail to submit your evaluations.
• Check your STEM start date and mark your calendar for each 12 month interval of your STEM Extension for your reporting deadlines. (Example: Your STEM Extension Starts January 1, 2017. You must submit an annual evaluation January 1, 2018, and a final evaluation by January 1, 2019)
• Be sure to check email reminders from BIO
• If you received a 7-Month Extension of your previous 17-Month STEM Extension, your annual reporting timeline begins from the date USCIS received your 24 Month STEM request for the additional 7 months. (You will report one year from that date, and at the end of the STEM period.)
**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### About Employment

**What is considered full-time employment on the 24-month OPT STEM Extension?** Students must work at least 20 hours per week for an E-Verify employer in a position directly related to the STEM degree, following the goals and objectives stated in the I-983 training plan.

**I have two part-time jobs. One of the employers is enrolled in E-Verify but the other is not. Is this allowed?** No, only full time employment is allowed at your STEM-eligible E-Verify registered employer.

**How many days of unemployment am I allowed while on the 24-month STEM Extension?** Students who receive a 24-month OPT STEM extension are given an additional 60 days of unemployment for a total of 150 days over their entire post-completion OPT period. (17-24-Month Transition students with a 17-month Extension who request an additional 7 months of OPT have 120 days of unemployment until the final approval of the 24-Month Extension EAD. Once the EAD is approved, you can claim the 24-Month 150-day unemployment.)

**What counts as unemployment?** Each day during the period when OPT authorization begins and ends that the student does not have qualifying employment counts as a day of unemployment.

**Can I continue to work while my 24-month STEM Extension OPT is pending?** If a student’s EAD expires while the STEM Extension application is pending, the student is authorized to work until USCIS makes a decision about the application, but not more than 180 days from the date the student’s initial OPT EAD expires.

**What documents should I present to my employer once my 12-month OPT expires and my OPT STEM is pending?** The student should present the employer with the expired EAD card, the form I-20 recommending the student for STEM Extension, and proof of the timely filing with USCIS.

**Can I change STEM employers after my STEM EAD is approved?** Yes, see our OPT Reporting page for instructions on submitting a request to change employers.

**Can I switch employers while my OPT STEM application is pending?** Yes, but we do NOT recommend this. We recommend changing employers after the EAD is approved, if possible. Please contact BIO for instructions regarding how to change employers while your application is pending.
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

About Travel & Re-entry

**Can I travel outside the US during my approved OPT STEM period?** Yes. However, if the student whose approved period of OPT has started travels outside of the US while unemployed, the time spent outside the United States will count as unemployment against the 90/150-day limits. See the [OPT Travel page](https://example.com/option-travel) for required documents.

*If a student travels while employed either during a period of leave authorized by an employer or as part of their employment, the time spent outside the US will not count as unemployment.

**Can I travel outside the US while my 24-month STEM Extension OPT is pending?** Yes, travel while your OPT STEM application is pending is allowed if you have a valid F-1 visa and I-20 signed within the past 6 months. You should travel with a copy of your I-797 receipt notice and proof of your STEM employment. See the [OPT Travel page](https://example.com/option-travel) for required documents.

**Can I renew my visa while on OPT STEM?** Yes, you are eligible to renew your visa while on OPT STEM. Remember, that you are still applying for an F-1 non-immigrant visa which means you must demonstrate ties to your home country. See [Applying for a Visa](https://example.com/apply-visa) for a complete list of documents and advice on renewing the visa during OPT STEM and feel free to discuss your concerns with an advisor. Be advised that you MUST have an approved STEM EAD to apply for a new visa.

**What documents do I need to re-enter the U.S.?**
If you are eligible for travel, you will need:

- A valid passport with unexpired F-1 visa stamp (if applicable)
- Form I-20, signed on page 2 by an International Student Advisor at Berkeley International Office within the last 6 months
- Unexpired EAD Card.
- Proof of employment (or employment offer)