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

Berkeley International Office (BIO)  
2299 Piedmont Avenue  
Berkeley, CA 94720  
(510) 642-2818  
internationaloffice.berkeley.edu
OPT 24-Month STEM Extension Tutorial

Please note that this tutorial is for instructional purposes only.

An OPT STEM application to USCIS is your own personal application. You alone are responsible for timely filing with full documentation, understanding F-1 rules regarding OPT STEM Extension, and properly maintaining F-1 status.

Please review the entire tutorial and ask your BIO adviser if you have questions.
STEM OPT Tutorial Outline

- STEM Eligibility & Allowable Employment
- Application Process Overview
- Step 1: I-983
- Step 2: Updating SSU
- Step 3: BIO STEM I-20 Request Process
- Step 4: Preparing your OPT Request to USCIS
  - Application Deadlines
  - Mailing your Application
- Step 5: Receiving Your EAD & USCIS Documents
  - I-797C receipt Notice
  - Application, Tracking Problems & Requests for Evidence
  - Your EAD card
- Step 6: Maintaining Your F-1 Status & STEM Reporting Requirements
  - BIO SSU Hub & Reporting
  - Changes in Employer
  - Material Changes to the I-983
  - 6 Month Updates and Annual Evaluations
  - Travel during STEM OPT
  - Completing OPT and Grace Period
  - H1-B and STEM Extension
- Frequently Asked Questions
OPT STEM Extension Eligibility

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 allowed 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". To establish a bona fide relationship, the employer may not be the student’s “employer” in name only.

- Cannabis Industry- be aware that use and sale of cannabis is illegal at the federal level, although it may be legal in some U.S. states. To avoid possible deportation or inadmissibility form the US, students should avoid positions related to federally illegal substances.

According to [USCIS updates August 2018](#):

- Under no circumstances would another F-1 student on OPT or a STEM OPT extension be qualified to train another F-1 student on a STEM OPT extension.

- The employer that signs the Form I-983 **must be the same entity** that provides the practical training experience to the student.

- The employer has sufficient resources and personnel available to provide appropriate training in connection with the STEM opportunity at the location(s) specified in the Form I-983.

- The “personnel” who provide/supervise the training experience may be either employees of the employer, or contractors who the employer has directly retained to provide services to the employer; they may not be employees or contractors of the employer’s clients or customers.

- DHS will review on a case-by-case basis whether the student will be a bona fide employee of the employer signing the Training Plan, and verify that the employer that signs the Training Plan is the same entity that employs the student and provides the practical training experience.
Temp/Staffing Agencies, 3rd Party Worksites

- Staffing and temporary agencies may employ students under the STEM OPT program, but only if they will be the entity that provides the practical training experience to the student and they have and maintain a bona fide employer-employee relationship with the student.
- STEM OPT participants may engage in a training experience that takes place at a site other than the employer’s principal place of business as long as all of the training obligations are met, including that the employer has and maintains a bona fide employer-employee relationship with the student.
- A STEM OPT employer may not assign, or otherwise delegate, its training responsibilities to a non-employer third party (e.g., a client/customer of the employer, employees of the client/customer, or contractors of the client/customer).
- According to prior guidance from the Student and Exchange Visitor Program 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, "Training Plan for STEM OPT Students." 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.
When to Apply

STEM OPT I-20 Timing Considerations:
• You may apply as early as 90 days before your OPT EAD end date.
• You must submit your STEM I-20 request AT LEAST 2 weeks before your current OPT EAD expires.
• USCIS must receive your application before the expiration date of your OPT*. Check your OPT EAD card for the expiration.

IMPORTANT!
If you are applying for an OPT STEM Extension at the same time you are filing for an H-1B employment visa you MUST review both the H1-B & STEM Extension information at the end of this tutorial and the Cap-Gap webpage.

* Your OPT will be automatically extended for 180 days while your OPT STEM application is pending.
## Application Process Overview

In most cases we recommend beginning the OPT STEM application process 90 days before the expiration of your 12-month OPT period. The following slides will give you detailed information about each step.

1. **Complete the I-983 with your employer.**

2. **Access SSU Hub to update employment, complete the Apply for STEM form and pay your $350 Post-Completion Services Fee**
   This step can be completely entirely online in your SSU Hub.

3. **Receive STEM OPT I-20 from BIO.**
   The I-20 will be ready for pick up 5 business days after submitting your complete application and payment in SSU. 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, which is the date on the school attestation section of your I-20.

4. **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.

6. **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.
OPT STEM Application Timeline: (Example: July 9th 12-month OPT end date)

Step 1: Request your OPT I-20

- Submit STEM OPT request in SSU to BIO as early as 90 days before OPT ends
- Prepare I-983 w/employer; Update SSU

STEM OPT I-20 processed by BIO in 5 business days; Submit I-765 & supporting materials to USCIS

12-month OPT end date (example); last possible date for USCIS to receive STEM application

24-month STEM EAD received; Upload image of STEM EAD card to SSU

Several months ahead

4/10 4/15

Application processing with USCIS (3-month average)

You may continue to work on OPT for up to 180 days after your OPT expires while the STEM application is pending with USCIS

4/10 7/09

7/18
Step 1: 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.

The following slides provide specific details regarding the I-983; please confirm your application follows the requirements, even if your employer plans to prepare the form on your behalf.
Complete I-983

Use the UC Berkeley School code found here, even if your STEM degree was from a different school.

Bear, Oski

Oski@email.com
Complete I-983

Please write in the contact information of our SEVIS Coordinator, Mikaela, here. Please fill out this field EXACTLY as it appears here. (DO NOT use a different name). Please include ALL of the contact information. If there is not enough room, you can write it in by hand.

Note this is NOT the same name as the DSO who produced your I-20.

Your I-983 will be rejected if you write a different name.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name (Surname/Primary Name, Given Name):</th>
<th><a href="mailto:Oski@email.com">Oski@email.com</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Email Address:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of School Recommending STEM OPT:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of California, Berkeley</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designated School Official (DSO) Name and Contact Information:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Oki@email.com">Oki@email.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikaela Auerbach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2299 Piedmont Ave, Berkeley, CA 94720</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>510-642-2818</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:SEVISCoordinator@berkeley.edu">SEVISCoordinator@berkeley.edu</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of School Where STEM Degree Was Earned:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of California, Berkeley</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEVIS School Code of School Recommending STEM OPT (including 3-digit suffix):</td>
<td>SFR214F00615000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM OPT Requested Period: (mm-dd-yyyy)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>From</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One day after current EAD ends i.e: - 05/10/2017</td>
<td>24 months from STEM start date i.e.: 05/09/2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level/Type of Qualifying Degree:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Awarded (mm-dd-yyyy):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on Prior Degree? □ Yes □ No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Authorization Number:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Complete I-983

The CIP code is a 6-digit code (XX.XXXX) found on your I-20
- Page 1 if I-20 issued on/after 6/26/2015
- Page 3 if I-20 issued before 6/26/15

What are CIP Codes? Classification of Instructional 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.
Complete I-983

If your STEM degree is listed on your UC Berkeley I-20, check “no.”

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION 1: STUDENT INFORMATION (Completed by Student)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Name (Surname/Primary Name, Given Name):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bear, Oski</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Name of School Recommending STEM OPT:                  | Name of School Where STEM Degree Was Earned: |
| University of California, Berkeley                     | University of California, Berkeley |

| SEVIS School Code of School Recommending STEM OPT (including 3-digit suffix): |
| SFR214F00615000 |

| Designated School Official (DSO) Name and Contact Information: |
| Mikaela Auerbach 2299 Piedmont Ave, Berkeley, CA 94720 510-642-2818 SEVISCoordinator@berkeley.edu |

| Student SEVIS ID No.: |
| Found on page 1 of your I-20 |

| STEM OPT Requested Period: (mm-dd-yyyy) |
| One day after current EAD 24 months from STEM start date i.e.- 01/01/2019 |

| Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code: |
| Example: Computer Science, 11.0701 |

| Level/Type of Qualifying Degree: |
| Indicate your graduation date here |

| Date Awarded: (mm-dd-yyyy) |

| Based on Prior Degree? |
| □ Yes □ No |

| “USCIS #” listed on your 12-Month OPT EAD |

[Image of a US passport page with a red circle highlighting the date of birth]
Complete Form I-983

For detailed a detailed tutorial on completing the rest of the I-983, 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? See the next 2 slides slides 14-15 for more details.

Other points for consideration:

• We do not accept electronic signatures on the I-983. Please obtain handwritten signatures.

• Please ensure all responses are visible and upload a corrected I-983. (fillable PDF cuts off. If you don’t have enough room, please submit an attachment.)
I-983 Training Plan Section 5

**Student Role:** Describe the student's role with the employer and how that role is directly related to enhancing the student's knowledge obtained through his or her qualifying STEM degree.

- Responses that don’t include the name of your STEM degree and a description of the relationship between your role and your degree will be rejected.
- Example of response: [Description of role]. The student’s role enhances their knowledge related to their [STEM Degree] by [describe relationship].

**Goals and Objectives:** Describe how the assignment(s) with the employer will help the student achieve his or her specific objectives for work-based learning related to his or her STEM degree. The description must both specify the student's goals regarding specific knowledge, skills, or techniques as well as the means by which they will be achieved.

- Responses that don’t include learning objectives or how they will be achieved will be rejected.
- Example of response: The student’s work-based learning goals/work objectives related to their STEM degree are [describe goals & relation to degree] and they will be achieved by [describe methods].
I-983 Training Plan Section 5

**Employer Oversight:** Explain how the employer provides oversight and supervision of individuals filling positions such as that being filled by the named F-1 student. If the employer has a training program or related policy in place that controls such oversight and supervision, please describe.

- Responses that do not include description method(s) of oversight and supervision will be rejected.
- Example of response: The employer provides oversight and supervision through [describe methods].

**Measures and Assessments:** Explain how the employer measures and confirms whether individuals filling positions such as that being filled by the named F-1 student are acquiring new knowledge and skills. If the employer has a training program or related policy in place that controls such measures and assessments, please describe.

- Responses that do not include description of how knowledge and/or skills are assessed will be rejected.
- Example of response: The employer will measure and assess the student’s new knowledge and skills by [describe methods].
Step 2: Update SSU

Log in to your Student SEVIS Update (SSU) account in order to submit your STEM I-20 request. *(Note: most processing delays are due to failure to update all new required fields in SSU.)*

Before applying for STEM, you must:
1. Update your current address/email/phone
2. Update all current & previous OPT employment
3. Upload a copy of your OPT EAD (if you haven’t already)

After you have done this, click the “Apply for STEM OPT Extension” link in the Other Requests and Reporting Forms section.

See next slide for instructions...
Step 2: Update SSU (Apply for STEM)

On the STEM OPT Application page SSU Indicate with which employer you will be applying for your STEM Extension

- If applying with a current employer, select the employer, and click “Apply with this Employer”
- If applying with a new employer, click “Add New Employer and Apply”

This will lead you to the Employer Information form...see next slide..
Step 2: Update SSU (Employer info)

**Employer Information**

**For Current Employer**: you’ll be asked to complete the extra STEM section of this form (see next slide)

**For New Employer**: you’ll be asked to complete all fields

**Address**: We recommend that you verify the standard formatting of your employer’s address by using the “look up a ZIP code” feature on USPS.com.

*Address Street 1* should NOT contain the suite or office number. Please enter that in the field *Address Street 2*. 

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For Current Employer:

1. **Name of Company**
   - This is a required field.

2. **Start Date** - The date you started your employment with this company
   - MM/DD/YYYY
   - This is a required field.

3. **End Date** - The date your employment ended with this company.
   - MM/DD/YYYY
   - This is a required field.

4. **Optional Practical Training (OPT)** is intended to further the knowledge gained in your area of study while you attended UC Berkeley. Please explain, in your own words, how this employment opportunity is related to the Major Field of Study listed on your OPT I-20.
   - *Limit: 1000 Characters*

5. **Employer Address Line 1** – Street Address (e.g., 123 Sample St)
   - Address Line 1
   - This is a required field.

6. **Employer Address Line 2** – Unit number (e.g., Suite 6, Floor 10, etc."
   - Address Line 2

7. **Employer Address City**
   - City
   - This is a required field.

8. **Employer Address State**
   - State
   - This is a required field.

9. **Employer Address ZIP**
   - ZIP
   - This is a required field.

10. **Employer Title**
    - Title

11. **Do you work more or less than 20 hours a week?**
    - ☐ 20 or more hours a week
    - ☐ Less than 20 hours a week

12. **Please indicate whether you are pursuing contract work or have started your own business.**
    - ☐ Self-Employed
    - ☐ Volunteer/Unpaid
    - ☐ Employment through a Temp Agency or Consulting Firm
    - ☐ None of the Above
Step 2: Update SSU (Employer info)

For your STEM employer, please also complete sections 13-18. This information is required for STEM reporting.

**Employer’s E-Verify Company Identification Number**: Your employer should be able to provide you with this information. More information about the E-Verify program at [http://www.uscis.gov/e-verify](http://www.uscis.gov/e-verify)

**Employer Identification Number**: Your employer should be able to provide you with this information.

**Company Official Information**: This should match the information you listed on I-983 form section 5.

On the next pages, you will be give some instructions and asked to upload your I-983.
Step 2: Update SSU (Upload I-983)

Upload Documents

Please upload your completed I-983(s) following the instructions below.

Important Points for consideration:
- The I-983 is a 5-page form and must be uploaded in ONE FILE, not as individual pages.
- We do not accept electronic signatures on the I-983. Please obtain handwritten signatures.
- Please ensure all responses are visible on the I-983. The fillable PDF cuts off, so if your text exceeds the space allowed, please submit a separate attachment.
- Do not Section 1, DSO Name and Contact Information look like this? If no, please edit it before uploading.

TO UPLOAD:
1. Click the green Add Files button
2. Select the correct file to upload
3. Once file has been uploaded, identify your document by selecting an option in the drop-down menu under “Type of Document” on the right
4. Repeat this process for all required documents. You may upload more than one type of each document, if necessary
5. To finish the process, click Submit Uploads. You will not be able to make changes after you click Submit

According to your profile information, Granoll, Vanina, we need the following documents from you:
- Additional I-983

Note: Maximum File Size limit is 10MB

Select I-983
Step 2: Update SSU (Delivery Method)

After uploading, you’ll be asked to provide a Delivery Method for your new I-20.

Answer the questions as applicable and continue through the form clicking **Continue** until you reach the Submission Summary page.

Note: **Express Mail** will require payment from you via Eship Global. You will need to follow the instructions given and provide an order number. BIO will use this order number to send your I-20 to you.
Step 2: Submitting your SSU form

Summary

⚠️ Warning! Your application is not complete until you review your information and click “Submit” below 🔘

STEM Post Completion Services Payment Instructions (click here to edit this section)

The STEM OPT Post-Completion Services fee pays for all services related to your F-1 24-month STEM Optional Practical Training (OPT) visa status maintenance provided by BIO as required by DHS federal regulations.

The STEM OPT Post-Completion Services Fee is required only for students applying for F-1 24-Month Optional Practical Training (STEM OPT).

Note: This payment is not the only part of your STEM OPT I-20 Request. You must submit all your STEM Application materials via SSU Hub as instructed on our STEM OPT webpage.

STEM I-20 Requests will not be processed without payment or a complete application.

At the end, you will reach the summary page. Review your information and click Submit at the bottom of the page.

Lastly, you will get to the Submission Confirmation page.

Submission Confirmation

✔️ You have successfully submitted this form.
Step 3: Submit STEM OPT Post-Completion Services Fee Payment

The STEM OPT Post-Completion Services fee pays for all services related to your F-1 24-month STEM Optional Practical Training (OPT) visa status maintenance provided by BIO as required by DHS federal regulations.

*STEM I-20 requests will not be processed without payment or a complete application. This fee is non-refundable.*

In your SSU Hub, submit your $350 Post-Completion Services Fee to Berkeley International Office via credit/debit card by clicking "Submit your STEM OPT Payment" link at the bottom of the SSU Hub homepage. You will receive a receipt via email.

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**Other Request & Reporting Forms**

- Apply For STEM OPT Extension
- H-1B Cap Gap Extension I-20 Request
- J-1 Academic Training Final Evaluation (for J-1 students ONLY)
- Report EARLY End of OPT/Academic Training
- Submit STEM OPT Post-Completion Fee Payment ($350)
Step 3: Submit STEM OPT Post-Completion Services Fee Payment

Check or Money Order:
You may also pay your $350 Post Completion Services Fee via check or money order.

Make it payable to “UC Regents.” Your name should be on the check. In the memo line, include your Student ID# and “STEM OPT.” See samples.

Bring it in person during business hours listed on our contact page or mail it to:
Berkeley International Office
2299 Piedmont Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94720-2321
*If express mail, use the phone number 510-642-2818
**Receive your I-20 and check it for accuracy**

STEM OPT I-20 processing time is 5 business days. This does not include mailing time.

Check your I-20 and notify BIO immediately if there are any errors with your I-20.

### School Attestation
Make sure there is a BIO advisor signature. Check the date – USCIS must receive your application within 60 days of the ISSUE Date date listed on page 1.

### Student Attestation
You should sign & date I-20. Students 18 and over do not need a parent’s signature.

---

**Table: I-20 Certificate for Nonimmigrant Student Status**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department of Homeland Security</th>
<th>I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement</td>
<td>OMB No. 1615-0048</td>
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**SEVIS ID:** N0012645978

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<th>Field</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GIVEN NAME</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAMILY NAME</td>
<td>J appended to last name</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIELD OF STUDY</td>
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<td>1234567890</td>
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<tr>
<td>COUNTRY OF BIRTH</td>
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<td>DATE OF BIRTH</td>
<td>1 January 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORM I-20 REASON</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORM I-20 CONVERSION - UPDATED FROM I-20 OR NAME CHANGE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**School Information**

- **School Name:** Berkeley International Office
- **Address:** Berkeley International Office, 2399 Piedmont, Berkeley, CA 94720
- **School Official To Contact Upon Arrival:** International Student Advisor
- **Date:** 27 January 2001

**Program of Study**

- **Major 1:** Chemical Engineering 14,001
- **Major 2:** None 0,000
- **Required:** English proficiency is sufficient
- **Program Start Date:** 20 July 2015
- **End Date:** 18 August 2016

**Financials**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tuition and Fees</th>
<th>Living Expenses</th>
<th>Expenses of Dependents</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$ 31,995</td>
<td>$ 25,000</td>
<td>$ 0</td>
<td>$ 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>$ 59,995</td>
<td>$ 25,000</td>
<td>$ 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Remarks**

- **BIO Advisor Signature:** June 2017
- **Date Issued:** 30 June 2017
- **Place Issued:** Berkeley, CA
- **Name of Parent/Guardian:** John Doe
- **Address:** 123 Main Street, Berkeley, CA 94702

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**Berkeley International Office**

**Step 1: Request your OPT I-20**

- **Adviser Signature:** June 2017
- **Date:** June 2017
- **Name of Parent/Guardian:** John Doe
- **Address:** 123 Main Street, Berkeley, CA 94702
Check your OPT I-20 for accuracy

**Employment Authorization Dates**
Check 24-month STEM OPT start and end dates. Verify employer name for accuracy.

**Travel Endorsements**
Check for adviser signature. Endorsements are good for 6-month periods.

You will receive a new travel signature at the time you request your OPT STEM I-20.

Please note: USCIS must receive your application within 60 days of the DATE ISSUED date on PAGE 1, not the travel signature date. (The travel signature may be a later date.)
Step 4: Prepare & Mail Your Application Materials
Step 2: Prepare and Mail the OPT Application

Required documents for STEM OPT application

- 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 of $410. Check, Money Order, or Credit Card Payment made payable to: “U.S. Department of Homeland Security.” Write your SEVIS ID in the memo line.
- Copy of STEM OPT I-20 (pages 1-3) that was issued by BIO within the past 60 days. Don’t forget to sign it!
- Copy of your previous OPT and/or previous STEM OPT I-20s.
- Copy of any previous OPT EAD or STEM EAD. If you still have the approval notice (form I-797), attach a copy as well.
- Copy of passport biographical page and F-1 visa stamp, if applicable.
- Copy of expired passport biographical page if you used that document to enter the US most recently.
- Print out of electronic I-94 record (or photocopy of both sides of paper Form I-94)
- Proof of final STEM degree: Final Transcript and/or copy 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, include the I-20 from your previous school. If the I-20 is not available, request a screenshot of your SEVIS record.
- Additional Documents—Check the BIO STEM webpage to see if you should submit additional support letters with your STEM application for concurrent H1-B filing or for certain specific majors.

No documents are required for F-2 dependents.
Gather the required documentation

Passport 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](https://travel.state.gov) website.

- Submit 2 identical color passport photos taken within 30 days of filing your application. The photos must have a white to off-white background, be printed on thin paper with a glossy finish, and be unmounted and unretouched. The passport-style photos must be 2” by 2”. You must remove your glasses and your head must be bare unless you are wearing headwear as required by a religious order of which you are a member.

- Using pencil or felt pen, lightly print your name and I-94 number on the back of the photo. Do not damage the photo surface by pressing hard while writing.

![Passport Photo Requirements Diagram](image.png)

Professional Photography

USCIS has been examining passport photos more strictly. BIO recommends students have their photos taken professionally. Recently, students have been visiting the following locations to obtain their photos.

**Metro Publishing**
2440 Bancroft Way
Berkeley, CA 94704

**Foto Shop**
131 Berkeley Sq
Berkeley, CA 94704
Gather the required documentation

Check, Money Order, or Credit Card:

- **USCIS Payment Methods**: Check/Money Order or Credit Card Payment for $410.

- **Check/Money Order** should be made payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security" with SEVIS number in the memo line. 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.

- **For Credit Card** payment, submit form **G-1450**, authorized payment amount $410. You may only use a credit card account with a U.S. billing address- no foreign billing address is allowed.

Money orders and cashier checks should include the same information as a personal check.
Gather the required documentation

Form G-1145

- Attach to the top of the OPT STEM Application Packet
- This is an optional form. Use this form to request text and email notification(s) regarding your application.
- Download the form at http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/g-1145.pdf

WARNING!

USCIS will rarely contact you by phone regarding the status of your application.

If you receive a phone call from a person claiming to work for USCIS or any other government agency, do not provide your personal information to them. Note the person’s name and phone number and contact a BIO advisor before responding.
Step 2: Prepare and Mail the OPT Application

Gather the required documentation

Form I-765
Download the I-765 form from the USCIS web site. Important: Use the most current version. It is best to download it just before mailing the application since USCIS updates it frequently.

How to fill out Form I-765
• Type or print legibly in black ink.
• Answer all questions fully and accurately.
• If a question does not apply to you, type or print “N/A”
• Print and complete ALL pages 1-7. If any pages are missing, your application will be rejected!

Some parts of the I-765 can be confusing. The following slides will help you complete those “tricky” questions. Contact BIO with ANY questions or uncertainties about completing the I-765.

Note: In mid-July 2018, the current version of the I-765 was updated. This tutorial reflects the newest version.
Complete the Form I-765

Top Portion: leave this entire section blank

PART 1. Reason for Applying, pg. 1
Check the “1.a.” box for “Initial Permission to accept employment.”
Complete the Form I-765

PART 2. Information About You, pg. 1

#1 Name

Your entire family name should be in CAPITAL letters. Use upper & lower case for the first name. Please write your name exactly as it appears in the Surname/Family Name and Given Name fields on your I-20. Note your I-20 DOES NOT have the Middle Name field!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAMILY NAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#2-4 Other Names Used

Enter your previous names, including nicknames you have used in official records or documentation. If your I-20 Preferred Name is different then the names you wrote for #1, include that here. If none, write “N/A”

If you are typing out the I-765 electronically, be aware that the form does not allow you to write the “/” character into these fields. You will need to hand-write the “N/A” wherever this appears in the instructions.
Complete the Form I-765

PART 2. Information About You, pg. 2

U.S. Mailing Address
This is where you would like the Receipt Notice and the EAD card to be mailed. This is very important!

The address should be valid for at least 3-5 months, the length of time it will take to process the application. If you have plans to move during this time, use a reliable friend or family member’s address to receive the EAD (indicate this in #5.a.) It is also possible to use a P.O. Box for mailing addresses.

#5.a. If the mailing address belongs to someone other than yourself, put their full name (First Name Last Name) here. If this is your address, write “N/A.”

#5.b-5.e Write a valid mailing address in the U.S. It may be a residence, commercial address, or PO Box. You may not use BIO’s address.

#6 If you listed a mailing address that is NOT your current physical living address, select “No” and complete #7.a-7.e. with your current physical address. If “Yes”, write “N/A” in #7.a-7.e. Physical address should reflect where you actually live.

*If the you live outside of CA, please pay attention to the special mailing instructions later in the tutorial.
Complete the Form I-765

PART 2, pg. 2, continued...

Other Information

8. F-1 students do not have an A-Number, leave this blank.

9. F-1 students do not have a USCIS Online Account Number, leave this blank.

10-11. The responses to these questions should be straightforward. Please complete them accurately.

12. Check “Yes” since you have previously applied for an EAD. You will need to provide copies of your previous EADs.
Complete the Form I-765

PART 2, pg. 2, continued...

#13.a.-17.b. Social Security Number (SSN)

#13.a.-13.b.
You will already have an SSN from your previous OPT. Check “Yes” and enter your SSN with one letter in each box.

#14.
Since you probably already have an SSN, you will not need to apply for one. Check “No” and leave questions #15-17 blank.

Check “Yes” if you need a replacement SSN card and complete #15-17.b

13.a. Has the Social Security Administration (SSA) ever officially issued a Social Security card to you?  

If yes, complete 13.b  X Yes  No  If no, skip to 14

NOTE: If you answered “No” to Item Number 13.a., skip to Item Number 14. If you answered “Yes” to Item Number 13.a., provide the information requested in Item Number 13.b.

You should receive your Social Security card from SSA about 2 weeks after receiving your approved EAD from USCIS.
Complete the Form I-765

PART 2, pg. 2-3 continued...

The responses to these questions are straightforward. Please complete them accurately.

**#18 Countries of Citizenship, pg 2**

List all as applicable (use Part 6 of the I-765 if needed) or write “N/A” in 18.b. if you do not have multiple citizenships.

**#19-20 Place of Birth, pg 3**

List the name of the country as it was named when you were born, even if it’s name has changed

Make sure your Date of Birth is in the correct format of MONTH - DAY - YEAR. (01/31/1998 not 31/01/1998)
Complete the Form I-765

PART 2, pg. 3 continued...

Information About Your Last Arrival

#21.a. I-94 Number
Use your current I-94 number. This is at the number found on the electronic I-94 record or on the top left corner of the paper Form I-94 card (see example)

#21.b-e. Passport Information
Enter the information directly from your passport; use the information of the passport you last used to enter the U.S. (this should match the country on your I-20)

#21.c. Travel Document
Write “N/A” here
Complete the Form I-765

PART 2, pg. 3 continued...

#22 Date of Last Entry into the U.S.
Your most recent entry date can be found on your passport admission stamp, electronic I-94 record, or paper I-94 card.

#23 Place of Last Arrival into the U.S.
Name of the Port of Entry city from your most recent entry. This information can be found on your passport admission stamp, travel history section of your electronic I-94 record, or paper I-94 card (usually as a code, i.e. “SFR” for San Francisco). If you drove across the border, write the name of the city where entered the U.S.

#24 Immigration Status at Last Entry
Status in which you entered the U.S. If you entered with an I-20 as a student, write “F-1 Student.”

#25 Current Immigration Status
Current status should be “F-1 student.” If not, talk to a BIO advisor, and this status should be reflected in your current I-94.

#26 SEVIS ID
Your SEVIS ID appears on the top left side of your I-20 and starts with N00...
Complete the Form I-765

PART 2, pg. 3 continued…

Information about your Eligibility Category

#27 Eligibility Category
Use the code (c) (3) (C) for STEM OPT.

#28.a. Degree: Indicate here the name of your UC Berkeley STEM-qualifying major.

Note that for some programs, the name of your Major differs from the way it appears on your I-20. This will be addressed in section 6 of the I-765.

• You cannot qualify based on a minor.

#28.b. Employer’s Name: Your employer should be able to provide you with this information.

#28.c. E-Verify 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
Complete the Form I-765

PART 2, pg. 3 continued…

#29-31.b Other Eligibility Categories
Write “N/A” in these fields or leave check boxes blank as they are not applicable to applying for STEM OPT

Leaves blank

Berkeley International Office
Complete the Form I-765

PART 3. Applicant’s Statement, pg. 4

#1.a. Select 1.a. to indicate that you have read and understood the questions.

#3-6 Provide your information as requested

1.a. I can read and understand English, and I have read and understand every question and instruction on this application and my answer to every question.

1.b. The interpreter named in Part 4, read to me every question and instruction on this application and my answer to every question in a language in which I am fluent, and I understood everything.

2. At my request, the preparer named in Part 5, prepared this application for me based only upon information I provided or authorized.

3. Applicant's Daytime Telephone Number
   1234567890

4. Applicant's Mobile Telephone Number (if any)
   1234567890

5. Applicant's Email Address (if any)
   oskibear067@gmail.com

Leave blank
Leave blank
Complete the Form I-765

PART 3, pg. 4 continued...

Applicant’s Declaration and Certification

Read the entire declaration carefully.

Applicant’s Signature

#7.a.-7.b. Hand sign your name and provide the date of the signature

Important!
Your signature will be scanned and must fit within the box. It must NOT touch the box outline. If the signature is too big and crosses a line, your application could be delayed. Be conservative and use a signature smaller than normal. Please see the example.

Troubleshooting Signature Line:
In some cases the “Don’t forget to sign!” automatic reminder will not disappear when you print the form.

You should remove the auto filled “Don’t forget to sign!” We recommend trying:
• To open the form in the most recent version of Adobe Reader.
• To print a blank version of the form’s second page from your web browser.
Complete the Form I-765

PARTS 4 and 5, pgs. 4-6

These sections are not applicable to you, since you’ve completed the form yourself, so write “N/A.” This section is for those who use an interpreter or other paid preparer to complete the form.
Complete the Form I-765

PART 6, Additional Information, pg. 7

#1.a.-1.c. Provide your name again as listed in Part 2, 1.a-1.c.

#2. Leave blank

#3.a-3.c. Reference Pg. 2, Part 2, Item 12

#3.d.

• Write “Previous OPT/STEM Authorizations” and list your previous OPT and STEM OPT start & end dates and receipt numbers

• Write “See attached documentation for previous OPT/STEM authorizations”

• Include copies of all previous and OPT/STEM I-20s and EAD cards with your application.

Previous OPT/STEM Authorizations:

OPT 1/8/2015-1/7/2016; WAC4565250057

OPT 8/8/2017-8/7/2018; SRC45985652500

(These are examples only)

See attached documentation for previous OPT/STEM authorizations.
Complete the Form I-765

Page 7, Part 6 if you:

• most recently entered the US on a passport that is no longer valid and you now have a renewed passport

If this does not apply to you skip to the next slide.

PART 6, Additional Information, pg. 7

#1.a.-1.c. Provide your name again as listed in Part 2, 1.a-1.c.

#2. Leave blank

#3.a-3.c. Reference Pg. 3, Part 2, Item 21.d. (If you already used sections 3.a-3d use the next available section, 4a-d, etc)

#3d. Write an explanation that clarifies that you have two passports: one that you used for entry but is no longer valid, and one that is currently valid.

#3.d. Include copies of both passports and your I-94 with your application.
Complete the Form I-765

PART 6, pg. 7, continued...

#4.a-4.c. Reference Pg. 3, Part 2, Item 28

(If you already used sections 4.a-d use the next available section, 5a-d, etc)

#4.d. Academic Info

- Write “Name of major in SEVIS:” and list your major as written on your I-20
- Write “University of California, Berkeley Approved CIP Code for Major:” and list the CIP Code as written on I-20
- Write “See attached I-20 and diploma or transcript”
- Include copies of your I-20 and diploma or transcript
Complete the Form I-765

SINCE YOU COMPLETED PAGE 7, PART 6

You must add your signature and the date to Page 7.

Simply sign and date in the blank space at the bottom of page 7

Oski Bear  August 1, 2018
Complete the Form I-765

You are done with the I-765!

1. Review all the information on the form for accuracy. You must submit ALL 7 pages of the I-765.

2. Make a copy of your completed I-765 application to keep for your records, in case there is a problem with the application.

3. Next, gather the required documentation and copies ...see following slides
Gather the required documentation

Photocopy of STEM OPT I-20 (all pages):

- Must be received by USCIS within 60 days of the ISSUE Date listed on page 1).
- Original must be signed by the student at the bottom of page 1 before copying.
- Original must be signed by a BIO advisor in blue ink before copying
- The requested STEM OPT start and end dates will appear on page 2.
- Do not mail the original I-20.
Gather the required documentation

Photocopy of PREVIOUS OPT I-20 (all pages):

Page 2 should show your initial 12-month OPT authorization.
Gather the required documentation

Photocopy of Passport and Visa:

• Photocopy the passport biographic page (with photo and passport expiration date); passport must be valid 6 months into the future.

• Photocopy the F-1 visa, if applicable; visa does not need to be valid.
Gather the required documentation.

Photocopy of I-94 Information:

The I-94 can be either:


OR

• A paper I-94 card stapled into your passport. Include a copy of both sides, even though the back side may be blank.

OR

• A copy of an I-797 Change of Status Approval Notice which includes a new I-94.
Gather the required documentation

Photocopy of current OPT EAD: (and previous STEM EADs if applicable)

- Include a copy of the front and back of the card.
- Include I-797 notice of approval if available.
Gather the required documentation

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

• For information about ordering official transcripts see: http://registrar.berkeley.edu/Default.aspx?PageID=tranalumni.html
Gather the required documentation

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.
Gather the required documentation

Additional STEM OPT Documents - CIP Code/Major Name Mismatch

- In some cases, your UC Berkeley Major Name on your transcript/diploma and does not match the CIP Code name listed on page 1 of your I-20. (Example: Your Major title is “Journalism” the designated CIP code for the Journalism degree at UC Berkeley is 09.0702 — Digital Communication and Media/Multimedia.)

- BIO recommends that students in these “CIP Code/Major Name Mismatch” programs submit a letter of explanation with the STEM application to avoid any confusion by USCIS.

- Review the Additional STEM OPT Documents, CIP Code/Major Name Mismatch section of the STEM webpage to see if a letter is recommended for your major.

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.
Gather the required documentation

Additional STEM OPT Documents- Concurrent H1-B & STEM Applications

Filing an H1-B and a STEM applications concurrently can sometimes cause complications in your SEVIS record. If you are planning to file for an H1-B and STEM at the same time, you should submit your OPT STEM application on time, before the original 12 month EAD expires.

BIO recommends including the following letter with your STEM Extension application to USCIS:

- **STEM/Cap-Gap Letter** - Include this letter if a Cap-Gap Extension appears on your OPT STEM I-20

- **STEM/H1B Letter** - Include this letter if NO Cap-Gap Extension currently appears on your I-20, but your employer has filed for an H1-B for you and your OPT expires before 9/30

- See [H1-B & STEM Extension](#) information at the end of this tutorial
Application Deadline

USCIS must receive the OPT STEM application:

- No later than **60 days after the OPT STEM I-20 ISSUE DATE** on page 1.
  - 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 OPT as noted by your EAD. Please account for mailing time.
- If you have received a **Cap-Gap Extension** of your I-20, you must still submit your STEM application to USCIS before the expiration of your 12 month EAD.
- You may apply up to 90 days before your current OPT end date.
- Track the status of your mailed application to be certain it was delivered on time.

**We recommend that you apply early.**

Your application must be submitted to USCIS from within the U.S.
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 Express or Priority 1-2 Day service and requesting Certified Mail/Return Receipt service to obtain proof of USCIS receipt.

• Be sure your mailing method includes tracking and guaranteed delivery

Where to Mail Your Application

• Use the address of USCIS Service Center that corresponds where you live

• 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.
USCIS Mailing Addresses

If living 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

Mail your application to...

**U.S.P.S.**
USCIS
PO Box 660867
Dallas, TX 75266

**Express Deliveries**
USCIS
Attn: NFB AOS
2501 S. State Hwy 121 Business Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067


**U.S.P.S.**
USCIS
PO Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

**Express Deliveries**
USCIS
Attn: NFB AOS
1820 E Skyharbor Circle S Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85034
I-797 Notice of Action

You should receive the notice by mail within 2-4 weeks after mailing the OPT application to USCIS.

- **The I-797 is very important.**
  - If you lose the receipt, it may be very difficult to replace it.

- **The I-797 is necessary if you want to:**
  1) inquire about the status of your OPT STEM application.
  2) travel outside the U.S when your OPT STEM is pending.

**Receipt Number**
The case number for the OPT application at USCIS. Check the status of the case on the USCIS web site at [https://www.uscis.gov](https://www.uscis.gov)

**Received Date**
Date when 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 your name, date of birth, and address on the I-765 receipt notice.
If incorrect, contact BIO immediately.

**Contacting USCIS**
If you have any problems or questions with the OPT application, contact a BIO advisor before calling the USCIS Customer Service.
USCIS Issues & Tracking
Your Case

Case Status Updates
BIO strongly recommends that you sign up for an account at https://www.uscis.gov. This can allow you to receive automatic updates and monitor your case. Click “Check Your Case Status” and then select “Sign Up”.

General Case Tracking:
If you don’t sign up for an account, you can still track your case using the “Check Your Case Status” Tool.

Address Changes:
If your address changes, you can update it online through the “Change of Address” tool. Keep in mind that address changes can take 10 business days to process, and could jeopardize your OPT EAD delivery. We recommend keeping the same address for your entire OPT processing, if possible.

Case Inquiries:
You can submit inquiries about your case using the Case Inquiry tool, if your don’t receive your receipt or other notifications, or if your EAD has been pending for more than 75 days.
Application Problems- RFE or Rejection/Denial

RFE- If there is a problem with your application, the USCIS may 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

Rejection/Denial- 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 60-day grace period.

Contact BIO IMMEDIATELY if you receive an RFE, rejection, or denial.

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.
- 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.

- Review card to make sure the information is accurate. If not, contact a BIO advisor.
- Present your EAD to employers as proof of your legal work authorization in the US.
- The EAD is a required document for entry to the US during STEM OPT
- Upload a copy of your EAD card at io.berkeley.edu/ssu
Avoiding Immigration Scams

- It is very rare for USCIS or SEVP to contact you via phone regarding your application or your SEVIS record. Most notices from SEVP Portal are sent by email, and most notices from USCIS are sent via mail. They will generally never ask you for money.
- See USCIS’s website on how to avoid immigration scams, report fraud, and find authorized legal services.
- You can report immigration scams by contacting the FTC. Please visit the USCIS Avoid Scams Initiative website to learn more about avoiding immigration scams and reporting fraud.
Step 6: Maintaining Your F-1 Status & STEM Reporting Requirements
1. Reporting Requirements

- Submit updates online at io.berkeley.edu/ssu
- You must report any changes to your employment, address, and/or name within 10 days.
- Complete 6 Month validation with BIO.
- Report Material Changes to your I-983 to BIO within 10 days.
- 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...).
Reporting Requirements - BIO SSU HUB MANDATORY

- ALL STUDENTS ON OPT/STEM ARE REQUIRED TO USE THE BIO SSU HUB TO SUBMIT OPT UPDATES. BIO SSU Hub is a Berkeley International Office system.

- Submit updates online at io.berkeley.edu/ssu

SEVP Portal- OPTIONAL

- The Student Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) has its own “SEVP Portal” for students on OPT/STEM. On Day 1 of your Approved OPT, you will receive an email from SEVP with instructions on how to create an account. This email will come from do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov

- Be aware of scams- SEVP will NEVER ask you for a payment to register for the optional SEVP Portal.

- Registration for SEVP Portal is OPTIONAL. BIO WILL NOT USE the SEVP Portal for OPT reporting purposes. BIO recommends using SEVP Portal as “view-only.”
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.)

Log into SSU and do the following:

1. Update your address/phone/email.
2. Add the new employer information and upload a new I-983 form for the new employer. You will choose the delivery method for your new I-20.
3. Edit your previous employer and add end date and upload the Final Evaluation I-983 page 5
4. Upload a copy of your STEM EAD (if we don’t have it already)
Report Material Changes to Form I-983

Material changes may include, but are not limited to:

- Change in employer address, supervisor
- 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.
• 4 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
SSU Hub Reporting

- You can see your reporting deadlines in the SSU Hub.
- Validation Report links will become available during your reporting period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Validation Type</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Reporting Window</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Validation Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-month (Eval required)</td>
<td>10/3/2018</td>
<td>9/23/2018 - 10/13/2018</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
<td>View</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final (Final Eval required)</td>
<td>10/2/2019</td>
<td>9/22/2019 - 10/12/2019</td>
<td>Not Yet Due</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SEVP Portal Reminders

- SEVIS SEVP Portal will also email you reminders regarding your 6 Month Validations and Annual Evaluations. Remember- You’ll do this reporting through the BIO SSU Hub.
- But, you can also check your reporting deadlines via the SEVP Portal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>What is Due?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug 6, 2019</td>
<td>Validation report for address and employer information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 6, 2019</td>
<td>Validation report for address and employer information Evaluation of Student Progress (page 5 of Form I-983)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 6, 2019</td>
<td>Validation report for address and employer information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 6, 2020</td>
<td>Validation report for address and employer information Evaluation of Student Progress (page 5 of Form I-983)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Missing these deadlines may affect the status of your SEVIS record.
For more information, go to the STEM CPT Hub (https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub) pages on the Study in the States website.
Important Information on Travel

- Avoid long absences from the US during the STEM OPT period. Time spent outside of the US while unemployed by a U.S. employer counts toward your 90 days of unemployment.
- Attempting to re-enter the U.S. close to the expiration date of your OPT can be risky.
- You must not enter the U.S. in a status other than F-1. This may result in the loss of your OPT eligibility.

Travel while STEM OPT is pending, But Before STEM OPT Card is received

- There is a higher risk associated with travel and return while your OPT STEM is pending after the program completion date of your OPT EAD. If there are any problems with your application, you may not be able to respond to USCIS in a timely manner, which could delay processing of your EAD.
- If your OPT STEM application is denied while outside the US, and your original OPT EAD has expired, you will not be able to re-enter the US in F-1 status and will not be able to reapply.
Applying for an F-1 Visa on STEM OPT

If you are traveling abroad and your F-1 visa has expired, you must obtain a new F-1 visa before returning to the U.S. When going to your visa interview, bring the documents below. For more information, visit: http://internationaloffice.berkeley.edu/visa_application

1. Valid passport (at least 6 months in the future)
2. Valid STEM I-20 with travel endorsement from a Berkeley International Office advisor within the past 6 months
3. STEM EAD Card
4. Proof of current STEM OPT employment (employer should match employer info listed on the I-20)
5. Evidence of sufficient funds (e.g. a bank statement, a letter from a sponsor or a job offer letter)

Check the U.S. Department of State web site for more information about getting a visa and specific requirements at the local embassy or consulate at www.travel.state.gov
Completing OPT & Grace Period

- You have a 60 day grace period following the end of the OPT STEM EAD
- The only additional extension of OPT available is the OPT Cap-Gap Extension, for students who have an accepted cap-subject H1-B application
- Failure to exit, continue your F-1 status, or timely request a Gap Gap Extension or USCIS Change of status will result in accrual of days of unlawful presence
- If you receive an Extension of your OPT, the grace period will begin after the end of the Extension period.

If you do not extend your STEM OPT via the H1-B Cap-Gap, and your EAD expires, you have the following options before the end of the 60 days grace period:

1. Exit the US within 60 days
2. **Continue your F-1 Status & Studies**: Transfer your I-20 to continue studies at another school OR request a Change of Educational Level to begin new studies at UC Berkeley
3. Work with immigration legal counsel regarding a Change of Status application to a new visa category. *You will need to check with your legal counsel regarding your allowed period of stay or required exit date if you have a pending change of status when your grace period ends.*
Can I file for an H1-B and a STEM Extension at the same time?

Yes, but filing these applications concurrently can sometimes cause complications in your SEVIS record. You can apply for an OPT STEM Extension before your OPT EAD expires. If you are planning to file for an H1-B and STEM at the same time, you should submit your OPT STEM application on time, before the original 12 month EAD expires. You should also be mindful to take extra steps when filing for your STEM Extension and continuing your F-1 status:

• Before requesting a STEM I-20, check with your employer and the legal counsel working on your H1-B and confirm that your employer recommends that you file STEM/H1-B concurrently at this time.
• When submitting your STEM Extension include the [STEM/Cap-Gap Letter](#) if a Cap-Gap appears on your OPT STEM I-20.
• If no Cap-Gap currently appears on your I-20, but your employer has filed for the H1-B and your OPT expires before 9/30 include the [STEM/H1B Letter](#)
• Update BIO as soon as possible regarding any Withdrawal or Denial of your H1-B petition. These actions may have an impact on your SEVIS record, and a BIO adviser will need to review the record to see if any corrections need to be made.
• If your H1-B is Approved, the STEM Extension (or pending STEM Extension) will end on the date your H1-B becomes effective. Report the end of your OPT via the SSU Hub. Select "Report Early OPT/Academic Training Completion" and provide your I-797 Approval Notice From USCIS. Your F-1 record will be completed after the effective date of your H1-B.
H1-B and STEM Extension

My employer filed for my H1-B and the petition has been Approved. Should I file for the STEM Extension if my H1-B is already Approved for Oct 1?

You may not need a STEM extension if your OPT is ending, and your H1-B has already been approved. If this is your situation, check with a BIO Adviser before submitting your STEM OPT Extension request. An adviser will need to review your record and H1-B approval notice. An adviser will determine whether a STEM Extension or Cap-Gap I-20 is better for you.

Before contacting a BIO Adviser, make sure that you have 1) uploaded a copy of your OPT EAD card to the SSU Hub (link is external) and 2) have your H1-B I-797 Approval Notice From USCIS.
**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. All employers must be authorized on the I-20 and in SEVIS.

**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.

**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 with USCIS, 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 (OPT STEM I-797 receipt notice).

**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. You should not start working before receiving authorization for the new employer.

**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.
**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](#) 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 possible if you have a valid F-1 visa and STEM 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](#) for required documents.

*If your employer has filed for an H1-B for you, please discuss your travel plans with your BIO adviser and with the legal counsel working on the H1-B request. BIO advisers can advise on travel as an F-1, but we cannot advise on how the travel might impact your H1-B application.

**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](#) 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 with approved STEM OPT?**

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)
Berkeley
INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Office Hours

internationaloffice@berkeley.edu

510-642-2818