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

How to prepare your application materials for submission to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS).

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

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.
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 I-983**

2. **Update SSU**

3. **Request OPT STEM I-20 from Berkeley International Office.**
   The I-20 will be ready for pick up 5 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, 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

Prepare I-983 w/employer; Update SSU

Submit STEM OPT request form to BIO as early as 90 days before OPT ends

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

Application processing with USCIS (3-month average)

4/10 4/15

7/09 7/18

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student 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>

| 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: |
|                                                               |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student SEVIS ID No.:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEM OPT Requested Period: (mm-dd-yyyy)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code: |
|                                                                          |

| Level/Type of Qualifying Degree:                                         |
|                                                                          |

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Based on Prior Degree?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Employment Authorization Number:                                        |
|                                                                          |
Complete I-983

Please write in the contact information of our SEVIS Coordinator here. You may hand write if there is not enough space to type.

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

<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>SEVIS School Code of School Recommending STEM OPT (including 3-digit suffix):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SFR214F00615000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designated School Official (DSO) Name and Contact Information:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mikaela Auerbach</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>Student SEVIS ID No.:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Found on page 1 of your I-20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEM OPT Requested Period: (mm-dd-yyyy)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One day after current EAD ends i.e: - 05/10/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 months from STEM start date i.e: - 05/09/2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level/Type of Qualifying Degree:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></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 □ No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

| **Name of School Recommending STEM OPT:**          |
| University of California, Berkeley                 |

| **Name of School Where STEM Degree Was Earned:**   |
| 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 |

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

| **Level/Type of Qualifying Degree:** |
| i.e. Bachelors, Masters, PhD |

| **Date Awarded:** |
| mm-dd-yyyy |

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

| **Employment Authorization Number:** |
| “USCIS #” listed on your 12-Month OPT EAD |

| **One day after current EAD ends** |
| 24 months from STEM start date |
| i.e.: 01/01/2017 i.e.: 01/01/2019 |
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

• 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].

• 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 the Student SEVIS Update (SSU) system DIRECTLY BEFORE you submit your STEM paper form to BIO. (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

*IF YOU ARE UPDATING AN EXISTING EMPLOYER:* Go back to the SSU main page and select the employer you wish to edit.

*IF YOU ARE ADDING A NEW EMPLOYER:* please do not over-write a previous employer’s information below. If you see employment information below and wish to add a new employer, go back to the SSU main page and select “Employer” from the tab.

1. **Name of Company**
   
2. **Start Date** - The date you started your employment with this company
   
3. **End Date** - The date your employment ended with this company
   
4. Your Optional Practical Training 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 OPT1/20.
   *Limit 1000 Characters
   
5. **Employer Address Line 1 - Street Address (e.g., 123 Sample St)**
   
6. **Employer Address Line 2 - Unit number (e.g., Suite 6, Floor 10, etc...)**
   
7. **Employer Address City**
   
8. **Employer Address State**
   
9. **Employer Address ZIP**
   
10. **Job Title**

---

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

**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.*
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 asked to upload your I-983.
Step 2: Update SSU (Upload I-983 & EAD)

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

Important Points for consideration:
- The I-983 is a 6-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 cut off, so if your text exceeds the space allowed, please submit a separate attachment.
- Do not list 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 3: Request OPT STEM I-20

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.

We’ll cover the following steps in the next slides:

- Complete the **OPT 24 Month STEM Extension Form**
- Attach check or money order for $300 Post-Completion Services fee.
- Submit the completed form by mail or in-person with fee to the Berkeley International Office

* Your OPT will be automatically extended for 180 days while your OPT STEM application is pending.
Step 3: Request OPT STEM I-20

You must complete all sections of the [OPT 24 Month STEM Extension Form](mailto:). Most questions are straightforward. Contact internationaloffice@berkeley.edu with questions regarding completing the form.

### Unemployment

Dates between positions, including weekends. For example, if you were unemployed from 7/10 - 8/10, that is 31 days of unemployment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Information</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Name:</td>
<td>Given Name:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Date (Month/Day/Year):</td>
<td>UCB ID Number:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days of unemployment since the start date of your OPT EAD:</td>
<td>Expiration Date of OPT EAD:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC Berkeley OPT Degree Major(s):</td>
<td>Are you applying to change your current 24 Month STEM employer? Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM Degree Information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- STEM Degree Level: Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Did you receive your STEM degree at UCB? Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- If NO, then at what school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Email Contact: (This email should match your primary email in SSU)</td>
<td>Telephone:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

☐ “I have read the [STEM OPT Application Guide](mailto:), I understand the responsibilities required for maintaining F-1 status during my period of STEM OPT authorization as stated on the reverse and in the [STEM OPT Application Guide](mailto:), and I am responsible all reporting requirements.”

| Signature of Student: | Date: |
Step 3: Request OPT STEM I-20

Again, on the OPT 24 Month STEM Extension Form most questions are straight forward. Please make sure to indicate your preference for the I-20 delivery method.

If you cannot take time away from work, standard postal mail takes 7-10 business days for delivery. This is free, but there is no tracking available. If you want speedier delivery or tracking, purchase a FedEx express mail label for delivery outside the Bay Area. If someone other than yourself will be picking up the form, please email your permission and their name to internationaloffice@berkeley.edu.
Step 3: Request OPT STEM I-20

A check or money order for $300 Post-Completion Services fee should be attached to your 24-month STEM Extension Form. Your name and student ID must be on the check.
Step 3: Request OPT STEM I-20

BY MAIL:

Berkeley International Office
2299 Piedmont Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94720-2321
*If express mail, use the phone number 510-642-2818

IN-PERSON:

During business hours listed on our contact page
Check your OPT I-20 for accuracy

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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Signature</th>
<th>MM/DD/YYYY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of California at Berkeley</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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
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.
- 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

No documents are required for F-2 dependents.
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 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

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
http://www.yelp.com/biz/metro-publishing-berkeley

Foto Shop
131 Berkeley Sq
Berkeley, CA 94704
http://www.yelp.com/biz/foto-shop-berkeley
Step 2: Prepare and Mail the OPT Application

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.
Gather the required documentation

Form I-765

Download the I-765 form from the [USCIS website]. **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 on your I-20.

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

**#2-4 Other Names Used**
Enter your previous names, including nicknames you have used in official records or documentation. 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.)

#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.d with your current physical address. If “Yes”, write “N/A” in #7.a-7.d. Physical address should reflect where you actually live.

*If 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

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

[Image showing Form I-765 and passport information]
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.

29. (c)(26) Eligibility Category. If you entered the eligibility category (c)(26) in Item Number 27., provide the receipt number of your H-1B spouse’s most recent Form I-797 Notice for Form I-129, Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker.

Leave blank

30. (c)(8) Eligibility Category. If you entered the eligibility category (c)(8) in Item Number 27., have you EVER been arrested for and/or convicted of any crime?

Leave blank

NOTE: If you answered “Yes” to Item Number 30., refer to Special Filing Instructions for Those With Pending Asylum Applications (c)(8) in the Required Documentation section of the Form I-765 Instructions for information about providing court dispositions.

31.a. (c)(35) and (c)(36) Eligibility Category. If you entered the eligibility category (c)(35) in Item Number 27., please provide the receipt number of your Form I-797 Notice for Form I-140, Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker. If you entered the eligibility category (c)(36) in Item Number 27., please provide the receipt number of your spouse’s or parent’s Form I-797 Notice for Form I-140.

Leave blank

31.b. If you entered the eligibility category (c)(35) or (c)(36) in Item Number 27., have you EVER been arrested for and/or convicted of any crime?

Leave blank

NOTE: If you answered “Yes” to Item Number 31.b., refer to Employment-Based Nonimmigrant Categories, Items 8. - 9., in the Who May File Form I-765 section of the Form I-765 Instructions for information about providing court dispositions.
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.

#2 Write “N/A”

#3-6 Provide your information as requested

Applicant’s Statement

NOTE: Select the box for either Item Number 1.a. or 1.b. If applicable, select the box for Item Number 2.

1.a. [X] 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.

Applicant’s Contact Information

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

6. [ ] Select this box if you are a Salvadoran or Guatemalan national eligible for benefits under the ABC settlement agreement.
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. 3, 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page Number</th>
<th>Part Number</th>
<th>Item Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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

PART 6, pg. 7, continued...

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

#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
Step 2: Prepare and Mail the OPT Application

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
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.
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.

• 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.

Your application must be submitted to USCIS from within the U.S.

We 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 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: 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: AOS
1820 E Skyharbor Circle S Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85034

Step 5: Recei ve the Employment Authorization Document (EAD)
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 website 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 am 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
Step 6: STEM Reporting Requirements
1. Reporting Requirements

• Submit updates online at [io.berkeley.edu/ssu](http://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](http://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](mailto:do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov)

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

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:

• 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
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.**
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.
### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

#### About Travel & Re-entry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Can I travel outside the US during my approved OPT STEM period?</strong></th>
<th><strong>Can I renew my visa while on OPT STEM?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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 <a href="#">OPT Travel page</a> for required documents.</td>
<td>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 <a href="#">Applying for a Visa</a> 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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*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.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Can I travel outside the US while my 24-month STEM Extension OPT is pending?</strong></th>
<th><strong>What documents do I need to re-enter the U.S.?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, travel while your OPT STEM application is pending is allowed 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 <a href="#">OPT Travel page</a> for required documents.</td>
<td>If you are eligible for travel, you will need:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- A valid passport with unexpired F-1 visa stamp (if applicable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Form I-20, signed on page 2 by an International Student Advisor at Berkeley International Office within the last 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Unexpired EAD Card.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Proof of employment (or employment offer)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Office Hours

internationaloffice@berkeley.edu

510-642-2818