

STEM OPT Extension Workshop

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Ground Rules

- Please submit your questions at the end
- Questions submitted throughout the presentation will be answered at the end
- Please refrain from asking case-specific questions
 - E.g. of a case specific question: “In my specific situation, X is also happening, and I also will be traveling to country Y, and I don’t have Z document—will that impact my app?”
 - For those, sign up for an advising appointment

Workshop Overview

- Eligibility Criteria
 - Employer requirements and responsibilities
- Application Process
 - When can you apply
 - I-983 form
 - ISSO Portal
- Reporting Requirements
- FAQs

Am I Eligible for STEM OPT?

- Students who are currently on Post-Completion OPT and hold a degree in an eligible STEM field
 - <https://www.ice.gov/sevis/schools#dhs-stem-designated-degree-program-list-and-cip-code-nomination-process>
- Students may use prior STEM degree if
 - Obtained at a SEVP-certified school in the U.S.
 - Degree was at the bachelor's level or higher
 - Degree was earned less than 10 years from date of application

Employer Responsibilities

- Job requirements are stricter....no self-employment
- Employers must be enrolled in USCIS e-Verify program
- Employers **MUST** pay you (different than on 12 month OPT)
- Employers must complete and sign I-983 form
- USCIS may visit your employers' worksite(s) to verify whether they are meeting the STEM OPT program requirements



How to apply for your STEM OPT Extension

When to Apply

- USCIS must receive your STEM OPT application before your 12-month Post-Completion OPT ends
 - You can submit to USCIS as early as 90 days before your OPT end date
 - You can request your STEM OPT I-20 as early as 100 days before your OPT end date
- You must submit your application to USCIS within 60 days of receiving your STEM-endorsed I-20

Step One:

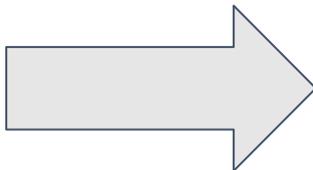


Begin filling out the Form I-983 (only pages 1-4)
with your STEM OPT eligible employer

- [Form I-983](#) (direct link)
- Norm the Niner's Form I-983 (for reference)
 - Linked on [ISSO STEM OPT page](#), Application Resources

Step Two:

Pay the \$225 [STEM OPT Deposit Fee](#)



Please select the service you are interested in:



Step Three:

Submit your STEM OPT Extension I-20 Request to the ISSO in your [ISSO Portal!](#)



*Students can only submit their STEM OPT I-20 request within 100 days of their 12 month EAD card ending

Step Three:

ISSO PORTAL

Norm the Niner

Home

Changing to F-1 Student Status

F-1 Practical Training

F-1 Student Services

View My Information

ISSO PORTAL Services Home Page

Online Services for International Students, Scholars, and Staff: Update your institutional information, request signatures, work authorization, certificate of enrollments, sign-up for sessions, and more.

Notifications

There are no current notifications.

Step Three:

F-1 Practical Training

Currently on regular OPT? Report your employment in the SEVP Portal.

You are responsible to keep your US address and contact information up-to-date in the SEVP portal

Tasks



Apply for a Cap Gap I-20



H-1B Employer I-20 Request



Request an SEVP Portal Reset,
Email Change or Other Fix



STEM OPT Reporting Validation
or Change



View My STEM Reporting
Deadline Dates



STEM OPT I-20 Request
Application

Step Four:

The ISSO has a 10 business day processing time frame for STEM OPT I-20s. You will be emailed via your UNC Charlotte email when your I-20 is ready for download.

Business Days in the USA

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
WORKDAY	WORKDAY	WORKDAY	WORKDAY	WORKDAY	OFF	OFF

Step Five:

Submit your STEM OPT Extension I-765 application. Use the STEM OPT Filing Guide (Linked on [ISSO STEM OPT page](#), Application Resources) for a step by step guide.



Biometrics

On December 12, 2025, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) released a photo and biometrics update outlining new requirements for how photographs may be submitted and reused for immigration benefit applications.

More information about what to expect can be found in your STEM OPT online filing guide.



STEM OPT Reporting Requirements

STEM Reporting Overview

How you report on STEM depends on what information you are reporting:

1. Use the SEVP Portal to report:

- Personal residential address changes
- Personal phone number changes

Data Flow: YOU>Portal>Government

2. Use the STEM Reporting Form in your ISSO Portal to report:

- Updates to your current employment (new title, new work address etc.)
- Loss of employment (resignation, being let go etc.)
- A new employer
- Validation/evaluation reports

Data Flow: YOU>ISSO>Government

Standard Preview: Churi, Naimisha Prashant

UNC CHARLOTTE

ISSO PORTAL

Home

Changing to F-1 Student Status

F-1 Practical Training

F-1 Student Services

View My Information

F-1 Practical Training

Currently on regular OPT? Report your employment in the SEVP Portal.

You are responsible to keep your US address and contact information up-to-date in the SEVP portal

Tasks

 Apply for a Cap Gap I-20	 H-1B Employer I-20 Request
 Request an SEVP Portal Reset, Email Change or Other Fix	 STEM OPT Reporting Validation or Change
 View My STEM Reporting Deadline Dates	 STEM OPT I-20 Request Application



This is where you will be submitting any employment changes, and validation reports.

Reporting Form: Changing Employers

Leaving one employer and joining another is composed of two steps:

- Reporting the end of employment with old employer (submitting final evaluation, bottom half of page 5 of I-983 form)
- Reporting the new employer (submitting a new I-983 form, pages 1-4)

These can be reported separately (if the leave date and the start date are NOT within 10 days of one another) or with one submission (if within 10 days) of the STEM Reporting Form.

Combined, a student is required to get: Page 5 of the I-983 with Final Evaluation from the old employer + Pages 1-4 of the new I-983 from the new employer.

Reporting: Validations/Evaluations

All students on STEM OPT will make at least 4x reports at the 6, 12, 18, and 24 month marks, starting from the start date of their STEM EAD. These are called “validation/evaluation reports”:

6 month report: validation only

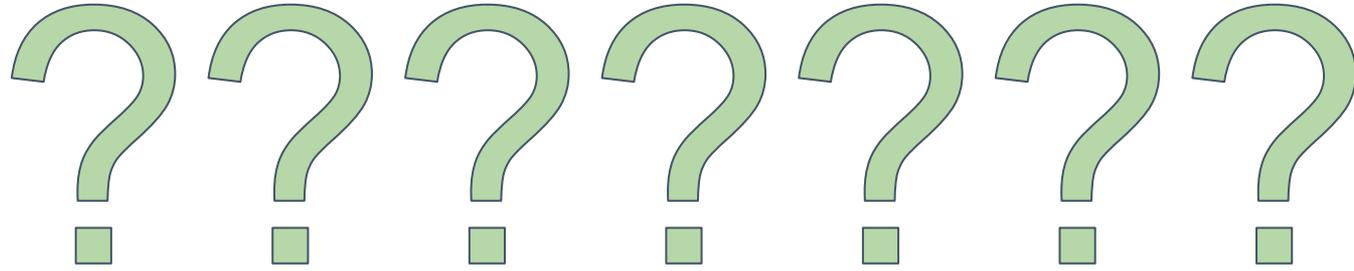
12 month report: validation + evaluation (top of Page 5 of I-983)

18 month report: validation only

24 month report: validation + evaluation (bottom of Page 5 of I-983)

Q: What does “validation” mean?

A: You review your employer info in your Portal. If everything is good, you submit the Reporting Form. If something is not up to date, you still submit the Reporting Form and report what needs to be updated.



STEM OPT FAQs

Do I have to stop working if my STEM EAD is not approved before my start date?

No! You get a six month extension to continue working if you submit your STEM OPT I-765 application before your EAD card expires.



What should I list as my site address on my I-983 form since I work from home?

"Site Address" is the address the ISSO must report in SEVIS, so it must be accurate. This should be the address where you are physically working. If you are working remotely, please list your remote location in this section and indicate that you are working remotely in the additional section on page 4.



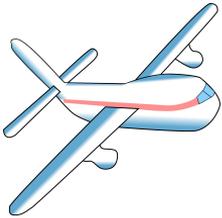
Can I apply for Premium Processing?

Yes, you can apply for Premium Processing in your USCIS online account when you submit your application, or you can go in at a later time and request premium processing.

\$1780

Can I travel while my STEM OPT is pending?

It is generally recommended to wait until your application is approved and you have your new EAD card in hand, as there is a risk of being denied re-entry to the US if your application is not approved while you are abroad.



Can I change employers while my STEM OPT is pending?

It is generally recommended to wait until your application is approved for you to change employers.

If you must change employers, contact the ISSO regarding the process.

What documents do I need to travel on STEM OPT?

Must have necessary documents for re-entry:

- Valid passport
- Valid F-1 visa
- EAD Card
- I-20 with travel signature from the past six months
- Proof of employment

If you don't have proof of employment, entry back into the US is not guaranteed!

How many days of unemployment time do I get on STEM OPT?

The maximum period of unemployment is 150 days, which includes any days of unemployment during the initial 12 months of Post-Completion OPT. For example, if you finish the 12 month Post-Completion OPT with 30 days of unemployment time accrued, then you would have 120 days of unemployment remaining during your period of STEM OPT.

ISSO Information

- **ISSO Advising Hours**
 - Walk in advising:
 - Tuesdays, 2-4pm
 - Fridays, 10am-12pm
 - Phone Advising
 - Mondays, 10am-12pm
 - Thursdays, 2-4pm
- **Email and Phone Communication**
 - 704-687-7781 or intlssso@uncc.edu
 - 3 business days processing time for responses
 - Email only ONE ISSO staff member
 - Professional communication expected

A photograph of a brick clock tower at the University of North Carolina Charlotte, with the word "Questions?" overlaid in large white text. The tower is the central focus, featuring two clock faces on its upper section. The building is surrounded by lush green trees and a clear blue sky. The entire image is framed by a thin white border.

Questions?