

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT & SCHOLAR SERVICES

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Procedures for Filing your **STEM OPT EXTENSION** Application

The **STEM OPT** application can be filed online, or you can mail in a paper application. Instructions are included below for each method. The earliest USCIS can receive your application is **90 days before** the current OPT end date, and the latest your application can be received is your current post-completion OPT end date.

Online Filing Instructions:

1. Visit www.uscis.gov/i-765 and select the button to “File Online”.
2. Create a USCIS login account, or login using your existing login credentials, if you already have an account.
3. Select MyUSCIS after logging in.
4. Select I am an applicant, petitioner, or requestor.
5. Select File a form online, and then select Application for Employment Authorization (I-765). Hit Start Form.
6. Review the form instructions thoroughly. You can follow the guidelines to complete the online form on our website: <https://iss.uconn.edu/tips-to-complete-the-i-765/>
7. Upload required documentation when prompted for the following evidence categories:
 - **2x2 Photo of you:** Upload a passport photo meeting listed format requirements. You should try to select a passport photo location that also provides digital photo copies, and pay extra for this service). If you will take your own photo, or make a digital copy of your printed passport photos, you must be sure to meet the stated photo requirements. Ensure there are no shadows or glare on the photos you submit.
 - **Form I-94:** A copy of your I-94. This will be either: 1) Print out of online admission record (<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>), 2) white card stapled to passport 3) If you obtained F-1 status through a Change of Status application in the U.S., the I-94 is attached to I-797 approval notice.
 - **Employment Authorization Document:** A copy of your prior Employment Authorization Document issued by USCIS for post-completion OPT, front and back sides of card.
 - **Form I-20:** A signed copy of your Form I-20 recently issued by ISSS recommending OPT. **PLEASE sign the bottom of the Form I-20 in the signature section before you photocopy it. This is extremely important!**
 - **College Degree:** Upload a copy of your diploma or transcript for your earned STEM degree. Also upload in this field:
 - List of all employers and dates of employment during your 12-month standard OPT period (optional)

- Students in MSBAPM, MSFRM, MBA: If you were provided a letter from ISSS with your STEM OPT I-20, upload it here with your STEM degree diploma or transcript.

- **Institution Accreditation:** This evidence is **only** required when your STEM OPT extension is not based on the UConn degree for your post-completion OPT. If your STEM OPT extension is based on a prior non-UConn degree, we suggest you visit the website for your prior school's accrediting agency to print documentation of your school's accreditation.

8. Upon completion of the online questionnaire, you will be notified of the filing fee (but not required to pay yet) and advised to fix any form errors. Make sure to re-read all completed questions carefully, because the form does not catch all errors. The online form highlights text fields that need revising in red.

9. After all question form fields are complete, you can print a pdf of a draft I-765 form for your records (do not send this or submit to USCIS). The link to this form is called "View Draft Snapshot".

10. Follow the prompts to continue to the fee payment section, where you will pay the filing fee through pay.gov. You will have the option to pay by debit/credit card or through direct withdrawal from your bank account.

Paper Filing Instructions:

Send the following materials to the appropriate USCIS Lockbox (see backside for address), assembled in the following order (first to last):

1. **\$520.00 (Consider filing online, the online application fee is only \$470)** in the form of a credit card, personal check, bank check or money order made out to ***U.S. Department of Homeland Security***. While credit card payment is also available, **we strongly recommend that students use personal check as their payment method.**
2. Two recent passport-style photos per instructions on form I-765; please print your name and SEVIS number in pencil or felt pen on the back of each photo.
3. Original form I-765 (www.uscis.gov > FORMS > I-765). Type form, print and sign, or complete form in black ink. Signature must be hand-signed, and keep your signature within the lines of the text box.
4. Copy of current I-94: Print out of online admission record (<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>) OR white card stapled to passport OR I-94 attached to I-797 approval notice (if you changed to F-1 from another visa category within the U.S.)
5. Copies of any previous Employment Authorization Documents (EAD cards) issued to you, including for your current OPT.
6. Copy of your unexpired passport ID page, showing your picture, name, and date of birth.
7. Copy of Form I-20 with STEM OPT Extension recommendation on page 2 (you keep the original). **PLEASE sign the bottom of the Form I-20 in the signature section before you photocopy it. This is extremely important!**
8. Copies of I-20 forms listing any previous periods of OPT or CPT, including OPT/CPT used at other schools or for prior degree levels.
9. Copy of your degree certificate, diploma, or academic transcript for your earned STEM degree. ISSS also provides some students a letter issued by ISSS to demonstrate that your degree program is a

qualifying STEM Designated Degree program. If ISSS provided this letter with your STEM OPT I-20, include it with your diploma or transcript.

10. List of all employers and dates of employment during your 12-month standard OPT period (optional).
11. OPTIONAL: To receive e-notifications by text message or email from USCIS when your I-765 is received please fill out form G-1145 and clip it to the front of your package. (www.uscis.gov > FORMS > G-1145)
12. Send all materials by USPS certified mail (delivery confirmation) or express mail to the applicable USCIS Lockbox:

USCIS Chicago Lockbox

All student I-765 Applications for OPT and STEM OPT Extension File your application at USCIS Chicago Lockbox	
For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Deliveries: USCIS ATTN: I-765 C03 PO Box 805373 Chicago, IL 60680-5374	For Express Mail and Courier Service Deliveries (UPS, FedEx, DHL): USCIS Attn: I-765 C03 (Box 805373) 131 South Dearborn – 3 rd Floor Chicago, IL 60603-5517

NEXT STEPS AFTER SUBMITTING YOUR I-765 APPLICATION TO USCIS:

- 1. Receive I-797 (Receipt Notice):** The USCIS Lockbox (for paper-based filing) will forward your application to a USCIS Service Center for processing. Several weeks after receiving your application, USCIS will send you a Receipt Notice (I-797). This will list the Service Center where your application is being processed, the date your application was officially received, and a case number in reference to your application. Carefully review the notice to make sure your application was received within the timelines outlined above, and that your name is spelled correctly on the I-797. If your name is not spelled correctly, contact the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) number listed on your receipt notice. Students who file their OPT application online will get their I-797 receipt notice electronically in the USCIS portal immediately after filing.
- 2. Receive I-797 (Approval Notice):** After processing your OPT application, USCIS will send you an approval notice (I-797). This is a notification on your application status, NOT your work authorization/permission. USCIS processing time for OPT is up to 90 days but can exceed this length in some cases.
- 3. Receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD):** You will receive an EAD in the mail from USCIS, separate from the approval notice. This is your proof of employment authorization. You may not start working until you receive your EAD and the start date becomes effective. EADs cannot be forwarded by the post office, so if you move or change your mailing address you MUST notify USCIS with the updated address for EAD mailing. Update your address with USCIS - <https://egov.uscis.gov/coa/displayCOAForm.do>
Update your address with U.S. Post Office - <https://moversguide.usps.com/mgo/disclaimer>
- 4. Report EAD, OPT Employment Information and Address Changes to ISSS online:** If you have received your EAD, but you are not employed, go to <https://issu.uconn.edu/> > Quick Links > “[Immigration Document Update](#)” to submit a copy of your EAD. If you received your EAD and you have employment

to report, go to the Quick Link menu “[Report OPT Employment Update](#)”. You may upload the EAD copy in the OPT Employment Update record. **Submit a new OPT Employment Update record any time your employment status changes, or any time you add a new position. You must report these changes within 10 days of the change.**

REMEMBER: STEM OPT participants must additionally submit a [STEM OPT Validation Report](#) to ISSS every 6 months.

You must also report any changes to your U.S. and home country addresses. Visit <https://iss.uconn.edu/> and under Quick Links select “[Update Address](#)” and follow address instructions for OPT and Academic Training students.

Failure to update ISSS with your employment information can lead to termination of your SEVIS record.

Rejection Notice/Request for Evidence

If something is missing from your application, your application may be rejected, or, USCIS could accept your application and send you a letter requesting further information to process your application. Pay special attention to the deadline for you to submit any missing information. If your application is *rejected*, you will receive your entire application packet returned with a cover sheet, instructing you to resubmit your application with the missing materials. If you are sent a request for evidence, you will receive a letter from USCIS that outlines the information needed to process your application. **If you receive either a rejection notice OR a request for evidence you must contact ISSS and submit a copy of your rejection notice or request for evidence so we can advise you further on next steps. Failure to do this could result in problems with your application.**

Traveling on OPT

If you will travel while on OPT you must carry your EAD, I-20 with travel signature, proof of employment, and valid passport and visa to return. Please note that your travel signature is only valid for **six months** while on OPT, and your passport must be valid at least six months into the future. Submit a Travel Information Record to ISSS online at <https://iss.uconn.edu/travel/>