STEM OPT Application Checklist

F-1 visa holders can decide to submit their STEM OPT applications online through USCIS's application portal, or by a paper-based application to USCIS. Review OIS' Form I-765 Online Filing Information Fact Sheet to learn about the differences between these two different methods, and which method may be best for you.

NOTE: you *must* receive a STEM OPT I-20 from OIS before you submit the STEM OPT application to USCIS.

Be sure you are eligible for the STEM OPT extension before applying! Check the Department of Homeland Security STEM Designated Degree program list to confirm.

- [ ] **Original,** completed Form G-1145, only if applying via paper mail (www.uscis.gov/g-1145)
- [ ] **Original**, completed and signed Form I-765 (www.uscis.gov/i-765)
  - If applying via paper mail:
    - ➢ Be sure that you use the most recent version of the form. Submit *all* pages to USCIS.
    - ➢ Review OIS' Sample I-765.
  - If applying online:
    - ➢ Follow the logic-based questions on the online form.
- [ ] Copy of newest I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation on page 2. *No staples, please!*
- [ ] Copies of previous CPT / OPT I-20s (including those from former schools). Make sure your signature is on the front page of each I-20. *No staples, please!*
- [ ] Copy of the biographical page of your passport
- [ ] Copy of your F-1 visa stamp (not required for online application)
- [ ] Copy of your I-94 Admission Record
- [ ] Copy of your diploma & transcript, showing that you completed your STEM-qualifying academic program
- [ ] Copy of previous EAD card(s)
- [ ] Filing fee of **$410.00**
  - If filing via paper mail:
    - ➢ *If paying by check or money order*, make payable to: "*U.S. Department of Homeland Security*". Remember to write the date on the check!
    - ➢ *If paying by credit card*, complete and sign Form G-1450 (www.uscis.gov/g-1450).
  - If filing online:
    - ➢ You will submit an online credit/debit card payment via the government's online portal.
- [ ] Photos:
  - If filing via paper mail:
    - ➢ Two US passport-style (2 inches x 2 inches) photographs taken within the last 30 days. **Lightly print your name and I-94 Number on the back of each photo in pencil**. Place the photos in an envelope or plastic bag, and use a paperclip to attach them to the application.
  - If filing online:
    - ➢ You will upload a digital photo that meets the government's requirements.
- [ ] **Make a copy of all application materials for your personal records *before* submitting to USCIS.**
  - If filing via paper mail:
    - ➢ Keep the receipt with tracking number (FedEx, UPS, USPS) after mailing your application.
  - If filing online:
    - ➢ print a copy of your Form I-765 after you submit it.

Mailing Instructions

If you choose to submit a paper application, your application materials must be **received** at USCIS no later than **60 days** after the STEM OPT Recommendation I-20 has been issued.

    USCIS Mailing Address – for Express Mail and Courier Deliveries (UPS, FedEx):
    USCIS   Attn: I-765 C03
    131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor
    Chicago, IL 60603-5517
    Phone: 800-375-5283

    PLEASE NOTE: Please confirm the correct filing address at the USCIS website - https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses. This information listed above is current as of the revised date below.

If applying online, you do not need to mail anything to USCIS. Your application is considered "received" immediately upon submission. Print your Receipt Notice and keep it with your personal records.

Deadlines for USCIS to Receive Application

- Up to 90 days before the end-date of your current EAD Card and NO LATER THAN the end date of current EAD Card.
- NO LATER THAN **60 days after** the new Form I-20 with STEM OPT Extension recommendation was created. If you are delayed in sending your application, please request a new I-20 from OIS.

You may continue working under current employment authorization for up to 180 days while the STEM OPT Extension application is pending. If you receive a request for further evidence (RFE) or a denial, there are specific deadlines by which you must respond. OIS can advise you how to proceed if this occurs.

Maintaining Your Status

- You must notify OIS of any changes in the following via My OIS (my.ois.pitt.edu):
  - Name, Address (within 10 days), Email, and/or Immigration Status
  - Employment Information
  - Other Status Related Changes (Transfers, Early Departure from U.S., etc.)

- With STEM OPT authorization, you are permitted an additional 60 days of unemployment, for a total of 150 days throughout the entire 36-month period of OPT and STEM OPT.

- The Department of Homeland Security may conduct site visits at STEM OPT locations, verifying the nature of the position, and the employer's compliance with all aspects of the STEM OPT regulations.

- You must confirm your employer information and personal address every 6 months via My OIS.

- When you report your STEM OPT participation at the 12 and 24 months milestones, you **must** also submit the "Evaluation on Student Progress" (12 months), or "Final Evaluation on Student Progress" (24 months) on page 5 of Form I-983.

- You will have a 60-day grace period after the expiration date on your EAD.

- Travel signatures on the I-20 during your STEM OPT are only valid for 6 months.

- **If you begin a new full-time degree program during your authorized STEM OPT Extension period, whether at Pitt or elsewhere, you will lose any time remaining on your EAD Card**. You will be required to cease employment upon release of your SEVIS record from Pitt to the new institution or upon issuance of a new Form I-20 for a different program.

Feel free to contact your Immigration Specialist with any questions about STEM OPT reporting requirements, or other questions about how to maintain your F-1 status while on STEM OPT.