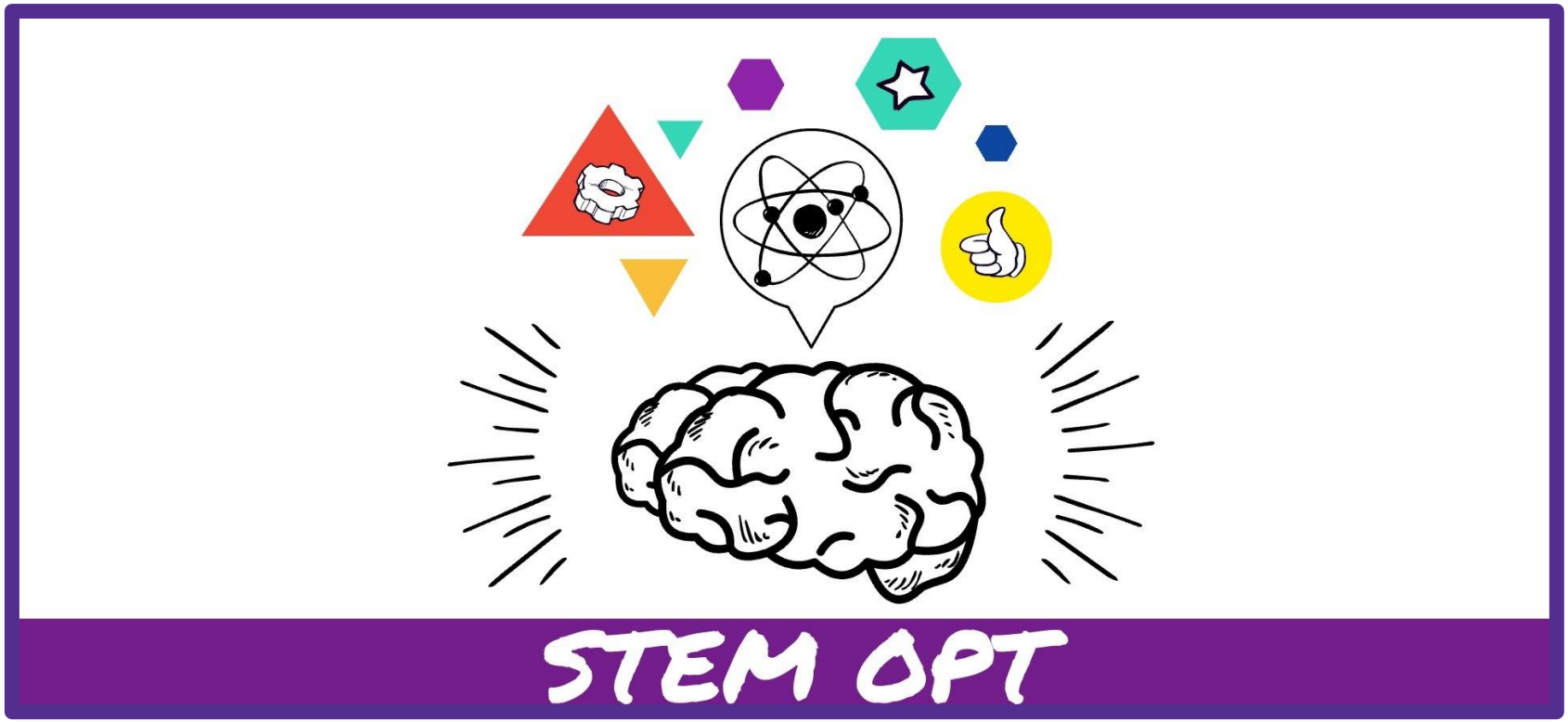
STEM OPT Onboarding



Office of the University Registrar

International Student Compliance

STEM OPT Extension

- **STEM OPT onboarding must be completed before submitting the STEM OPT Request and I-983 Training Plan to ISS.**
- **STEM OPT onboarding ensures you are knowledgeable of the regulations and criteria for participating in this work benefit program.**
- **Submitting the STEM OPT Request is required to obtain a DSO recommendation on your I-20. This I-20 is needed to apply for STEM OPT with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).**
- **The STEM OPT extension is a 24-month temporary training directly related to a degree program in an approved STEM field. Your earned STEM degree(s) with Florida Poly meets this criterion.**
- **You must complete your 12 months of post-OPT to be eligible to apply.**
- **If you meet this criterion – please proceed to the next slide.**

STEM OPT Student Criteria

- **You must hold a bachelor's degree or a higher in an eligible STEM field from the DHS's STEM Designated Degree Program List.**
- **You can apply for the 24-month extension no sooner than 90 days before your current OPT end date and no later than the day your current EAD card expires.**
- **You must submit the I-765 *Application for Employment* to USCIS before the current 12-month OPT expires.**
  - USCIS must receive the I-765 before your EAD end date, for you to be allowed to remain in the US and continue employment for 180 days or until a decision is made on your application.
- ***NOTE: You may not apply for STEM OPT during the 60-day grace period after Post-Completion OPT has ended.***

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STEM OPT Employer Criteria

- **You must have an employment offer to be eligible to apply for STEM OPT.**
- **The employer must be enrolled in E-Verify, provide formal training and learning objectives, and guarantee a minimum of 20 hours of work per week.**
- **You cannot use self-employment or a staffing agency; you must be directly hired by the employer listed on the I-983.**
- **Your STEM OPT employer can be the same as your post-OPT employer, or you can have a new employer.**
- **You must work with the employer to complete the Form I-983 and verify how the employment directly relates to your STEM degree.**
  - Please see About Form I-983.

NOTE: You and the employer must be aware of USCIS regulatory requirements.

Employment Requirements Recap

- **Qualifying STEM OPT employment must:**
  - Be for at least 20 hours per week of work.
  - Be paid work (unpaid employment is not permitted on STEM OPT).
  - Be directly related to the STEM-eligible field of study.
  - Be with an employer enrolled in E-Verify.
  - Be direct employment (**not** through a staffing agency or self-employment).
  - Have a fully completed I-983 Training Plan.

SEVIS STEM OPT Reporting Requirement

- **F-1 students approved for STEM OPT must comply with reporting requirements.**
- **DSOs must validate the information in students' SEVIS records every six months during the 24-Month STEM OPT Extension.**
- **This means you must report to SEVIS and ISS every six months throughout the 24-Month extension period.**
- **Any changes before the reporting period must be reported to ISS no later than 10 days after the change.**
  - See OPT Reporting Form.

SEVP Portal STEM OPT Reporting

SEVP Portal sends an email 30 days before the 6-month report is due.

Keep track of due dates independently of these automated reminders.

You are responsible for reporting no later than the dates set by SEVIS.

Not receiving the SEVP reminder <u>is not</u> an acceptable reason, and will cause ineligibility for OPT.

SET A REMINDER FOR EVERY 6 MONTHS FROM THE STEM OPT START DATE!

12 months:
Annual Evaluation & STEM Reporting

6 months:
STEM Reporting

18 months:
STEM Reporting

24 months:
Annual Evaluation & STEM Reporting

EAD Card

- **After USCIS approves STEM OPT, they will mail a new Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card.**

- **You must email ISS a color copy of the front and backside as soon as it is received.**

ALWAYS REPORT UPDATES

- **You must report any of the following changes to ISS within 10 days of the change on the OPT Reporting Form:**
  - US Home Address or Phone Number Changes
  - New Employment: You must submit a new Form I-983.
  - Update Previously Reported Employment Information: Report any change to your current employment information on file by sending a revised Form I-983 and verifying:
    - Company Name
    - Employer Address
    - Employer EIN
    - Job Description
    - Change in Work Hours
    - Supervisor Title, Email, and Phone Number

Unemployment

- **You may not accrue more than a total of 150 days of unemployment between post and STEM OPT.**
- **If you do not exceed the unemployment limit, you will have a 60-day grace period following the end date on the STEM EAD card.**
  - During the grace period, you must prepare to leave the US, apply for a change of immigration status, or transfer your F-1 status to begin a new academic program.
- **All departures during the grace period are final; you may not return to the US in F-1 status during the grace period.**

Traveling While on OPT

- View the Traveling While on OPT guide for guidance on traveling while OPT is pending or has been approved.

- Remember you must complete a Travel Signature Request if you wish to travel outside the US while on STEM OPT.

- Travel signatures are valid for 6 months while on STEM OPT.

US Tax Filing Requirement

- **You will still be required to file a US tax return while on OPT.**
  - You and any dependents residing in the US with you (including children) must file Form 8843 annually.
  - As a student earning income on OPT, you must also file Form 1040-NR
- **The university licensed GLACIER Tax Prep (GTP), a web-based software system to help prepare your tax return (at no cost). You will receive an email no later than mid-February when GTP is available for use:**
  - GTP will ask questions and fill in the correct forms for you.
  - You must download, print, and mail them to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).
  - You do not have to use GTP, it is offered as an option, but you may choose to file your tax returns or use a tax filing professional service to assist you.
- **View the International Student Tax Filing Guide.**
  - You must seek the assistance of a certified tax professional if you have additional questions about filing taxes. The guide will provide a few options for this.

Remember!

- **Report changes to ISS within 10 days of the change.**
- **You may accrue no more than a total of 150 days of unemployment total between post and STEM OPT.**
- **If you want to end your STEM OPT early, you must notify ISS immediately and complete the Student Departure Form.**
- **You must still meet US tax filing requirements**
  - Refer to the International Student US Tax Filing Guide for more information.

STEM OPT Application Checklist

- **Complete this STEM OPT Onboarding Module**
- **Complete and submit the STEM OPT Request, I-983 Training Plan, and Employment Offer Letter.**
  - Form I-983 must be completed by you and your employer
  - Employment Letter must be on employer's letterhead and signed.
  - Employment dates cannot start until after the end of the post-OPT.
  - USCIS has approved for the I-983 Training Plan to be signed physically or digitally by the student and their employer.
- **Once you obtain STEM OPT I-20, complete the USCIS I-765 application online and follow the Filing I-765 Online Guide**

LINKS TO FORMS & RESOURCES

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Select the hyperlinks to access the required forms and resources to apply for STEM OPT.

- **STEM OPT REQUEST**
- **FORM I-983, *TRAINING PLAN***
  - *TRAINING PLAN GUIDE*
- **USCIS ONLINE I-765, *APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT***
  - *I-765 Application Guide*
- **STEM OPT REPORTING FORM**
  - STEM OPT REPORTING GUIDE

YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR ONBOARDING!

- **Please proceed to the next step in your process:**
  - Complete the ISS STEM OPT Request and submit with the required I-983 and Employment Offer Letter