Welcome to the STEM OPT Workshop
New 24 Month STEM OPT General Overview
What is the 24-Month STEM OPT Extension?

- Also referred to as:
  - STEM OPT
  - STEM Extension
  - STEM OPT Extension
  - New version: 24-month OPT STEM Extension
  - Current version: 17-month OPT STEM Extension

- The 24-month extension of a student’s 12 month Optional Practical Training (OPT) for students in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math fields

- Available for students who have completed a bachelor’s degree or higher in an eligible STEM field from a SEVP-certified and accredited school within the past 10 years

- Employment on STEM OPT must be 20 hours or more per week with an employer that is enrolled in USCIS’ E-verify employment eligibility program

- Eligible students may apply for a total of 2 periods of STEM OPT
2 Main New Requirements:

6 month Validation Requirement

Form I-983 Training Plan
New Requirements for the 24 Month STEM OPT

6 month Validation Requirement

- Every 6 months, students must confirm the validity of employment information

- To do this, students must submit the e-form “OPT/OPT STEM Employment Update Request

- If the information has changed, ISS will print a new I-20 with employment information for student to pick up
New Requirements for the 24 Month STEM OPT

Training Plan (Form I-983)

- Before applying for STEM OPT, students must complete, sign and submit the Form I-983

- Students are responsible for facilitating the completion of this form and submitting it with the e-form request

- Students must submit (signed by student & employer)
  - Initial training plan,
  - 1 year progress report,
  - Final evaluation

- Students must report any changes to the training plan including: change in EIN, reduction in compensation, significant decrease in hours, changes to the nature, purpose, oversight or assessment of the student’s STEM OPT
Form I-983 Training Plan

https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/assets/stem-opt-hub/story.html
General Rules on STEM OPT

Employer Obligations

1. STEM employer MUST be an enrolled in USCIS’s E-verify program

2. Employer must assist with training plan. In signing the training plan, employer verifies:
   - They have sufficient resources and trained personnel available to provide appropriate training in connection with the specified opportunity
   - The STEM OPT student will not replace a full-or part-time, temporary or permanent U.S. worker
   - This opportunity will help students attain his/her training objectives
General Rules on STEM OPT

Employer Obligations

3. Employer must evaluate student progress
   - Sign progress report on annual basis, on the 12 month midpoint, and the final evaluation at 24 months prior to completing STEM OPT

4. Employer must report to ISS when employment ends, not later than five business days after the student leaves employment
General Rules on STEM OPT

Unemployment/ Hours on STEM OPT

- No more than a total of 150 days of unemployment are allowed between OPT and STEM OPT (90 days OPT, 60 days during STEM)

- A minimum of 20 hours per week or more is required on STEM OPT to count towards employment
General Rules on STEM OPT

Volunteer Work

- Students **cannot** receive STEM approval for a volunteer opportunity
- Students **MUST** have an e-verified employer in order to apply for STEM OPT
General Rules on STEM OPT

Employment Site Visits

- The new STEM rule allows for Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to perform site visits to employer locations that train STEM OPT students.

- Site visits are to ensure STEM OPT students receive structured and guided work-based learning experiences.

- DHS will provide notice to the employer at least 48 hours in advance of any site visit, unless the visit is triggered by a complaint.
General Rules on STEM OPT

STEM Eligibility for a Previous Degree

- Student must be currently participating in an OPT based on the completion of coursework toward a non STEM degree at a higher education level

- Previous STEM degree must be fully conferred and awarded from an accredited SEVP-certified institution

- Previous STEM degree must have been awarded within 10 years preceding the new STEM OPT application date

- Dual majors may qualify, as long as one of the degrees earned was STEM eligible

- Student may have been in other nonimmigrant status at the time of previous degree
Failure to comply with any and all requirements of the 24 month STEM OPT constitutes a violation of your F-1 status.

It is your responsibility to provide updated and accurate information to ISS!
24 Month STEM OPT Application Process
Am I eligible to apply for the 24 month STEM Extension?

**YES**

*Students currently on OPT who have completed a STEM degree:*

- **OPTION 1:** Before May 9, 2016: Apply using the current process for the 17 month STEM Extension. If your application is still pending from USCIS by May 10, 2016, you will receive a Request For Evidence (RFE) which will allow you to submit additional documents to be approved for the 24 month STEM extension.

- **OPTION 2:** May 10, 2016 or after: file for the 24 month STEM extension
OPTION 1: How to apply for the 17 month STEM Extension

Until May 10, 2016 students are only able to apply for the 17 month extension. After May 10 RFEs will be sent to qualifying students with pending applications to extend the 17 month STEM Extension to 24 month.

1. Log into iStart through ic.utah.edu and submit an online request using the e-form “OPT STEM Extension Request”

2. Receive a new STEM OPT I-20 from ISS
OPTION 1: How to apply for the 17 month STEM Extension

1. Submit OPT STEM Extension packet to USCIS including:
   1. OPT STEM Extension I-20 (signed and submitted within 60 days of the printed date on the I-20)
   2. Form I-765
   3. Copy of passport
   4. Copy of visa
   5. Copy of I-94
   6. Copies of all previous I-20s issued to you in your current education level
   7. Copy of any previous EAD cards (front and back)
   8. Two passport type photographs (taken within 30 days of submitting application)
   9. Fee of $380 in the form of check or money order
   10. Copy of transcript and diploma that states the degree field
   11. G-1145 (optional) attached to receive an e-verification of application acceptance

4. Mail your application to USCIS
OPTION 1: How to apply for the 17 month STEM Extension

5. If your application is still pending by May 10, 2016, and are eligible for the 24 month extension, you will receive an Request for Evidence (RFE) in the mail from USCIS
   - RFE will ask you to submit a new I-20 and to submit a completed Form I-983 to ISS
   - No additional fee is required

6. Once you have submitted the RFE documents, USCIS will be able to process and approve you for a 24 month STEM extension
OPTION 2: Am I eligible to apply for the 24 month STEM Extension?

May 10, 2016 or after: file for the 24 month STEM extension
OPTION 2: How to apply for the 24 month STEM Extension

Students are only able to apply for the 24 month STEM Extension beginning May 10, 2016.

1. Log into iStart through ic.utah.edu and submit an online request using the e-form “OPT STEM Extension Request”
   - When submitting the e-form you must upload your completed and signed Training Plan

2. Receive a new OPT STEM Extension I-20 from ISS
OPTION 2: How to apply for the 24 month STEM Extension

1. Submit OPT STEM packet to USCIS including:
   1. OPT STEM Extension I-20 (signed and submitted within 60 days of the printed date on the I-20)
   2. Form I-765
   3. Copy of passport
   4. Copy of visa
   5. Copy of I-94
   6. Copies of all previous I-20s issued to you in your current education level
   7. Copy of any previous EAD cards (front and back)
   8. Two passport type photographs (taken within 30 days of submitting application)
   9. Fee of $380 in the form of check or money order
   10. Copy of transcript and diploma that states the degree field
   11. G-1145 (optional) attached to receive an e-verification of application acceptance

4. Mail your application to USCIS

5. Receive EAD Card in the mail from USCIS
Am I eligible to apply for the 7 Month STEM OPT Extension?

- Currently on 17 month STEM OPT Extension:
- 150 days or more until your current extension expires at the time application is filed
- Apply to USCIS on or before August 8, 2016.

\[
\text{Current STEM OPT EAD End Date} - (\text{minus}) 150 \text{ calendar days} = \text{(equals)} \]

\[
\text{Date USCIS must receive 7 Month STEM OPT Extension (unless August 8 comes before this date)}
\]
How to apply for the 7 Month STEM OPT Extension

If your current OPT STEM has at least 150 calendar days remaining on it, you may apply for an additional seven months of OPT. Students may apply for this additional seven months from May 10, 2016- August 8, 2016.

1. Request a new STEM I-20 from ISS, using the e-form “OPT STEM Additional 7 Month Extension”
   - Request must include completed and signed Form I-983

1. Receive new STEM I-20 from ISS
How to apply for the 7 Month STEM OPT Extension

3. Submit OPT STEM packet to USCIS including:
   1. OPT STEM I-20 (signed and submitted within 60 days of the printed date on the I-20)
   2. Form I-765
   3. Copy of passport
   4. Copy of visa
   5. Copy of I-94
   6. Copies of all previous I-20s issued to you in your current education level
   7. Copy of any previous EAD cards (front and back)
   8. Two passport type photographs (taken within 30 days of submitting application)
   9. Fee of $380 in the form of check or money order
   10. Copy of transcript and diploma that states the degree field
   11. G-1145 (optional) attached to receive an e-verification of application acceptance

4. If approved, USCIS will issue a new EAD card with a validity period that starts on the day after the expiration date stated in the 17 month STEM OPT EAD
7 month STEM OPT Extension

Once approved for the additional 7 month extension, keep in mind that the new 24 month STEM extension rules now apply to you, including:

- You are allowed only 150 days total of unemployment (90 days on OPT, 60 days during the extension period). Unemployment time on the 7 month extension begins upon approval of the extension, not during the filing of the extension.

- You are required to update ISS with any changes to your training plan, employment, or personal information.

- You are required to submit your self evaluation signed by your employer to ISS.
Am I eligible to apply for the 24 or 7 month STEM OPT?

NO

• Students who have not completed a degree in a STEM field
• Students who have completed OPT and/or are in 60-day grace period by May 10, 2016 are not eligible for STEM extension under new or current rule
• Students who are currently on a 17 month STEM OPT that expires prior to May 10, 2016
• Students currently on a 17 month STEM OPT who have less than 150 days remaining on their STEM OPT by May 10, 2016
All Applications to USCIS

Please keep in mind, when calculating the latest date you are able to send in your application, your application is NOT considered completely “filed” until USCIS has received your application
24 Month STEM OPT
Final Reminders
STEM OPT Application Processing

- Please keep in mind any sort of OPT processing time can take 3-5 months to approve from USCIS.

- REMEMBER: You CANNOT begin work until you receive your EAD card with your new STEM start date.
While on STEM OPT, don’t forget!

Address Updates

- Notify ISS within 10 days of moving with your current residential address
- Make sure ISS has your current email address

Training Plan Updates

- Remember to submit a modified training plan to ISS should any material information on your original training plan change. Changes can include: EIN, reduction in compensation not a result of reduced hours, significant decrease in hours per week, changes to the nature, purpose, oversight or assessment of STEM OPT opportunity
- Submit 12 month evaluation and final evaluation signed by employer to ISS
CAP GAP OPT

The CAP-GAP rule is NOT affected by the new 24 month STEM Extension

- The CAP-Gap extension is an update in SEVIS and on your I-20 that reflects the fact that of change of status to H1-B petition has been filed but has not been receipted by USCIS

- If your employer files for an H1-B for you, but there is a gap of time between when your OPT ends and your H1-B starts, you may need a CAP GAP I-20 printed

- If the University of Utah is your employer and is applying for your H1-B, you do not need a CAP GAP

After STEM OPT

Grace Period

- You are allowed a 60 day grace period after your STEM OPT end date
- Once you leave the US during your grace period, you may not re-enter
- If you cancel your STEM OPT before, or after it is granted, the 60 day grace period does not apply to you, and you must leave the country immediately after your STEM OPT end date unless you have arranged for a transfer or change of visa type.

Returning to School After or During STEM OPT

- If you wish to return to school after completing STEM OPT, you must apply to a new University or program
- If you are changing schools, you must request a transfer of your SEVIS record by submitting a transfer form and acceptance letter to ISS
For More Information

Please be aware that information available from online forums and other unofficial sources may be incomplete and incorrect

Below are a few official websites with more detailed STEM OPT Information:

- **ISS Website:** [http://ic.utah.edu/OPT-changes.php](http://ic.utah.edu/OPT-changes.php)
- **Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP):** [https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/sevp-unveils-online-stem-opt-hub](https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/sevp-unveils-online-stem-opt-hub)
- **Study In The States:** [https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub](https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub)

Other Resources

Schedule an Appointment!

If you wish to meet with an ISS advisor after reviewing this information, please schedule an appointment by contacting our office:

International Student & Scholar Services
(801) 581-8876
International@utah.edu

Office Hours are Monday- Friday, 8:00 AM- 5:00 PM
Questions?