OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING
STEM EXTENSION
(STEM OPT)

This presentation provides an overview of the steps necessary to successfully prepare your STEM OPT application and important details you should be aware of during 24-Month STEM OPT.
What is STEM OPT?

F-1 students with degrees in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering or Math (STEM) may be eligible for an extension of their Post-Completion OPT work permission.

The extension permits those on Post-Completion OPT to apply for an additional 24 months of full time work authorization. OPT STEM is recommended by an advisor at the International Center, but final approval is granted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS).

This presentation will cover detailed information to help you prepare your STEM OPT application. You must review the entire presentation before mailing your application to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).
STEM OPT Terminology

- STEM OPT is also referred to as:
  - OPT STEM
  - STEM Extension
  - 24-Month OPT STEM Extension

- Commonly used terms:
  - DSO - Designated School Official
    - International Student Advisors at the International Center are called DSOs. This information will be required when you complete the form I-983.
  - SEVIS – Student an Exchange Visitor System
    - Updates about your academic program and participation in OPT STEM is updated in this U.S. Department of Homeland Security government database.
  - SEVP Portal – Student and Exchange Visitor Portal
    - An electronic system that allows you to make changes to your address, phone number, email, etc.
  - I-983 Training Plan
    - A plan to be completed by the student (F-1 on OPT STEM) with their employer during OPT STEM that is required when applying or making changes during your STEM OPT period.
STEM OPT Eligibility Requirements

• F-1 Student Eligibility:
  • Have earned a Bachelor’s degree or higher from a school that is accredited by a U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting agency and is certified by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)
  • Currently in an approved period of Post-Completion OPT
  • STEM degree has been obtained, you can verify if your degree is STEM eligible by reviewing the STEM Designated Degree Program List.
  • Students may be eligible to apply for STEM OPT twice during their academic career in the U.S.
  • Students may apply for STEM OPT based on a previous STEM degree from an SEVP, accredited U.S. institution within the last 10 years.

• Employer Eligibility:
  • Be enrolled in E-Verify and remain in good standing.
  • Assist student with completing Form I-983 Training Plan.
    • When completing this form the employer must prove that:
      • They have enough resources and trained personnel available to appropriately train the student;
      • The student will not replace a full- or part-time, temporary or permanent U.S. worker; and
      • Working for them will help the student attain his or her training objectives.
OPT STEM Employment Requirements

- Employment must be paid.
- Employment must be a minimum of 20 hours per week
- Employment must be directly related to student’s course of study.
- Students approved for the 24-month STEM OPT extension may not accrue more than a total of 150 days of unemployment throughout their entire Post-Completion and STEM OPT periods.
- Students cannot receive STEM approval for volunteer opportunities

- SEVIS records will automatically terminate for students who have no employment reported for over 150 days. Be sure to report employment to the International Center.
Applying for STEM OPT Based on a Prior STEM Degree

• To use a prior STEM degree to qualify for the STEM OPT extension, you must:
  • Have received your most recent degree (which does not need to be STEM-related) from a currently accredited Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) certified school.
  • Have received your prior, qualifying STEM degree* (at the Bachelor's level or higher) within 10 years of applying for the STEM OPT extension with USCIS.
  • The qualifying STEM degree needs to be on DHS's STEM Designated Degree Program List at the time you submit your application for the STEM OPT extension, rather than at the time that you received the degree.
  • Be employed with an E-Verify employer.

• If you determine that your previous degree was eligible, please complete the OPT STEM: Prior Degree Checklist and submit it with your STEM OPT application to the International Center.
STEM OPT APPLICATION TIMELINE
STEM OPT Timeline

• Applying for STEM OPT is a **Two-Step process:**

  1. **Prepare your STEM OPT application for review by the International Center.**
     - The International Center will issue you a new I-20 with a STEM OPT recommendation.
     - The International Center requires 7 business days to process your STEM OPT I-20.
     - You may apply for OPT STEM up to 90 days **before** the end of your Post-Completion OPT period.

  2. **Mail your STEM OPT application to USCIS**
     - After you receive your STEM OPT I-20 you will prepare your STEM OPT application packet for USCIS, which will require 90 days (minimum) to process your STEM OPT application.
     - OPT STEM employment will begin the day after your current EAD card end date and will end 24 months later.
     - You may work up to **180 days** past your current Post-Completion OPT EAD card end date as long as you have mailed your application to USCIS and your STEM OPT application is pending.
       - Note: Employment during this time is based on employer discretion and valid receipt notice from USCIS.
STEM OPT Timeline Chart

90 Days Before Post-Completion
EAD Cards Ends

180 Days

24 Months of STEM OPT Extension

End of Post-Completion OPT

Number of days a student can work with a pending OPT STEM application and no new EAD card

You can apply for STEM OPT during this timeframe

USCIS MUST receive OPT STEM Application by LAST Day of Post-Completion OPT.

OPT application MUST be mailed to USCIS within 30 days of the date the STEM OPT I-20 was issued by the International Center.

USCIS requires a minimum 90 days to review your application after they receive it.

The IC requires 7 business days to process your OPT I-20.
PREPARING YOUR STEM OPT APPLICATION
Prepare Your Application

- In the following slides you will find detailed information about the items which must be included in your STEM OPT application.
- At the end of the following slides, we will provide you with a checklist as a recommendation of the order to arrange your application for USCIS.
Passport Photos

- Provide 2 identical U.S. passport photos in a cover/envelope. See specifications from the U.S. Department of State.
  - The photos must be 2”x2” inches in size
  - It is recommended that the background of your photo be completely WHITE without shadows.
  - The photos must have been taken within the last 30 days of submitting your application to USCIS.
  - Photos should not have been used for previous U.S. immigration documents.
  - Write your full name (first and last name) on the back of each photo with black pen.
  - Places to take your passport pictures near UCI:
    - UPS Store, FedEx Office, UCI Passport Office

*sample photo is not to scale
Application Fee

• The fee to file a Form I-765 (STEM OPT Application) is $410.
• The International Center recommends using a personal check, money order, or cashier’s check.
  • Include the form you are applying for, and your SEVIS number in the memo field (sample below).
• USCIS also allows credit card payments by completing this form: G-1450 and including this on top of your application.
  • If your credit card company does not authorize this charge, USCIS will return your application to you.
This is an **optional** form that provides you with E-Notification from USCIS once your application is accepted by USCIS.
I-765 Preparation

- For **official instructions** about completing the I-765, please visit the USCIS website.
- This form must be **TYPED** or neatly **WRITTEN** in **BLACK** ink only.
  - Your **signature** is required at the end of this form, and **cannot** be typed.
I-765 Preparation

• Part 1. Reason for Applying
  • For OPT STEM: Select “Initial permission to accept employment.”
    • If you have previously applied for STEM OPT, you will mark “Renewal of my permission to accept employment.”

• Part 2. Information About You
  • Include your full legal name as it is noted in your passport.
  • If you have “Other Names Used”, please complete this field.
Part 2. Information About You (continued)

Your U.S. Mailing Address

- The “In Care of Name” should only be used if you are having your EAD card mailed to someone other than yourself.
  - If the mailing address is where you live, you can leave this blank.
  - If your mailing address is different from where you will live, please answer #6, and complete the physical address of where you live.

### Your U.S. Mailing Address

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5a. In Care Of Name (if any)</th>
<th>5b. Street Number and Name</th>
<th>5c. Apt.</th>
<th>Ste.</th>
<th>Flr.</th>
<th>5d. City or Town</th>
<th>5e. State</th>
<th>5f. ZIP Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>123 ANTEATER DRIVE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>IRVINE</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>92697</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Is your current mailing address the same as your physical address? [ ] Yes [ ] No
Apply for SSN with the I-765

- The I-765 form can assist in the application for a Social Security Number.
- If you already have a Social Security, follow this sample form and complete as it best applies to you.

TIP: Read the “NOTE” under each section, and then move ahead.
Apply for SSN with the I-765

- If you need to apply for an SSN, follow the sample to the right.

**TIP:** Read the “NOTE” under each section, answer, and then move ahead.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Example Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13.a. Has the Social Security Administration (SSA) ever officially issued a Social Security card to you?</td>
<td>Yes ☑ No ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.b. Provide your Social Security number (SSN) (if known).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Do you want the SSA to issue you a Social Security card? (You must also answer “Yes” to Item Number 15. Consent for Disclosure, to receive a card.)</td>
<td>Yes ☑ No ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Consent for Disclosure: I authorize disclosure of information from this application to the SSA as required for the purpose of assigning me an SSN and issuing me a Social Security card.</td>
<td>Yes ☑ No ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SAMPLE**
I-765 Preparation

• **Part 2. Information About You (continued)**
  • Your Country or Countries of Citizenship or Nationality
  • List all of the countries you are currently a citizen of.

```
Your Country or Countries of Citizenship or Nationality

List all countries where you are currently a citizen or national. If you need extra space to complete this item, use the space provided in Part 6. Additional Information.

18.a. Country

[Sample: EATER NATION]

18.b. Country

```
• Part 2. Information About You (continued)
  • Place of Birth
    • Complete Questions 19.a. through 20.

SAMPLE
Part 2. Information About You (continued)
- Information About Your Last Arrival in the United States
I-765 Preparation

- Part 2. Information About You (continued)
  - Information About Your Eligibility Category
    - For OPT STEM, use the category: (C) (3) (C)
    - Answer all of Question 28 as it is a requirement for STEM OPT
      - For 28.a. – Include the type of degree, and name of major
      - For 28.b. – List your employer’s name EXACTLY as it is listed in the E-Verify system.
      - For 28.c. – List your employer’s E-Verify Number
        - This number is NOT the same as the Employer Identification Number (EIN) and is normally 5-7 numerical digits.
Part 3. Applicant’s Statement, Contact Information, Declaration, Certification, and Signature.
- Read each item carefully and select this information that best applies to you as you complete this form.
- When completing 7.a., make sure that your signature is in BLACK ink, original, and inside of the box.
- Include the date which you completed your I-765.

Part 4. and 5. only need to be completed if you had additional assistance in completing your I-765. Refer back to the USCIS Form I-765 instructions if you need to complete this section.

**NOTE TO ALL APPLICANTS:** If you do not completely fill out this application or fail to submit required documents listed in the Instructions, USCIS may deny your application.
Part 6. Additional Information

- The latest version of the I-765 asks that you specify and provide further information if it is required.
- Use as many of the Additional Information fields as you need to provide more information on your I-765.
- Below are some examples of when additional information may need to be listed, and the following slides, will provide examples of how to list this information on the Form I-765.
  - Previous participation in Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
  - Previous participation in Optional Practical Training (OPT)
  - Change of Status inside of the U.S.
  - You have had previous SEVIS ID numbers
• **Part 6. Additional Information**
  - List all previous participation in Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
  - The IC recommends listing the degree program type you participated in CPT for, it was part-time or full-time, the exact dates of participation, and providing the I-20 that lists this information.

```
3.a. Page Number  3.b. Part Number  3.c. Item Number
3          2          27

3.d. Bachelors, CPT: Full-Time
      Google, Inc., MM/DD/YYYY-MM/DD/YYYY
      See attached I-20

SAMPLE
```
Part 6. Additional Information

- List all previous participation in Optional Practical Training (OPT)
- The IC recommends listing the degree program type you participated in OPT for, specify if it was part-time or full-time, the exact dates of participation, and providing the I-20, and EAD card that lists this information.
• Part 6. Additional Information
  • List all previous SEVIS ID Numbers (if any)
  • Specify the SEVIS number, the dates your SEVIS number was valid, and your degree level.

SAMPLE
I-765 Preparation

• Part 6. Additional Information
  • Change of Status filed in the U.S.
  • Specify your previous visa status, provide your I-797 Approval Notice, and I-94 Document.

SAMPLE
Passport

- Include a copy of your passport biographical page
Visa

• Include a copy of your **most recent** U.S. visa
  • If your visa is in an old passport, please also include a copy of your previous passport biographical page.
  • If you were approved for a change of status to F-1 within the U.S. and do not have a visa stamp, please include a copy of your I-797 receipt notice showing the **approved** Change of Status to F-1.
I-94 Document

- Include a copy of your most recent I-94 document
  - To print your electronic copy, please visit: [https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/](https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/)
  - If you have a paper I-94, include a copy of the front and back side of your I-94 card.
I-20 Visa Documents

- Include copies of **all** of your previous I-20 visa documents
- This includes I-20 visa documents issued to you from previous schools
• Include a copy of your UCI STEM Degree Diploma
EAD Card

- Include a copy of your Post-Completion OPT EAD card (front and back)
- If you have any other previous EAD cards, you will include these with your application as well.
This form must be completed by you and your STEM OPT Employer.

For “Designated School Official”, list the NAME, PHONE, and EMAIL of the person who issued your last I-20.

For Example: Peter Anteater, 949-824-7249, peteranteater@uci.edu.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name (Surname/Primary Name, Given Name):</th>
<th>Student Email Address:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANTEATER, PETER</td>
<td><a href="mailto:PETERANTEATER@UCI.EDU">PETERANTEATER@UCI.EDU</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of School Recommending STEM OPT:</th>
<th>Name of School Where STEM Degree Was Earned:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UC IRVINE</td>
<td>UC IRVINE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEM OPT Requested Period (mm-dd-yyyy): From:</th>
<th>To:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01/31/2020</td>
<td>01/30/2022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAJOR, 00.0000</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level/Type of Qualifying Degree:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHD, ENGINEERING</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Based on Prior Degree?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes [✓] No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Authorization Number:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USCIS# 000-000-000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

TRAINING PLAN FOR STEM OPT STUDENTS
Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) Optional Practical Training (OPT)
I-983 Training Plan for STEM OPT Students

- Start date of employment is the date you will start employment while on OPT STEM

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**SECTION 3: EMPLOYER INFORMATION (Completed by Employer)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer Name:</th>
<th>Street Address:</th>
<th>Suite:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer Website URL:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer ID Number (EIN):</td>
<td>Number of Full-Time Employees in U.S.:</td>
<td>North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Code:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPT Hours Per Week (must be at least 20 hours/week):</td>
<td>Compensation:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Salary Amount and Frequency:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Other Compensation (Type and Estimated Amount or Value):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
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</tbody>
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**SECTION 4: EMPLOYER CERTIFICATION**

I declare and affirm under penalty of perjury that the statements and information made herein are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. I understand that the law provides severe penalties for knowingly and willfully falsifying or concealing a material fact, or for any false document in the submission of this form.

I certify on behalf of the employer that this Training Plan for STEM OPT Students (“Plan”) is approved and that:

1. I have reviewed and understand this Plan, and I will ensure that the supervising Official follows this Plan.
2. I will notify the DSO at the earliest available opportunity regarding any material changes to this Plan, including but not limited to, any change of Employer Identification Number or the hiring of a new employer.

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Sample
I-983 Training Plan for STEM OPT Students

- The “Evaluation on Student Progress” is to be completed by you and your employer when you have reached one year during your STEM OPT period. Submit a new I-983 to the International Center with the OPT Employment Update form when you submit this evaluation.
The “Final Evaluation on Student Progress” is to be completed by you and your employer at the end of your 24-Month STEM OPT period, when you leave your employer, or when you change to another visa status.
SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION
Documents to Submit to IC

- Complete OPT STEM Extension Request form
- Form I-765
- I-94 document
- Copy or Original of I-983 Training Plan
- OPT Employment Update form
- Copy of front and back of Post-Completion OPT EAD card.
Submit Your Application

• Once you have prepared your application and have all items on the previous checklist, you will need to submit your application (as .pdf attachments) in a .zip file to the Student Request Upload Tool on the International Center website.

• The International Center will require 7 business days to review your application and process your new STEM OPT I-20.

• After your STEM OPT I-20 is returned to you from the International Center and you have prepared your application for mailing to USCIS, you will be ready to mail your complete STEM OPT application to USCIS for review.

• Your application must be mailed and received at USCIS before the expiration of your Post-Completion OPT.
Items to Mail to USCIS

- Two identical passport photos
- Include a check, money order, cashier’s check, or credit card payment form payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security for $410.00.
- G-1145 (optional)
- Form I-765
- Photocopy of passport biographical page
- Photocopy of most recent U.S. visa
- I-94 document
- Photocopies of all previous I-20 visa documents, including your latest document that recommends you for OPT STEM
- Copy of STEM degree diploma
- Copy of front and back of Post-Completion OPT EAD card.

The I-983 Training Plan is required to be kept on file at the International Center and should not be mailed to USCIS.
Mailing Your Application to USCIS

• Make a copy or scan of your STEM OPT application for your records before mailing to USCIS.
• USCIS will require a minimum of 90 days to process your OPT application.
• Mail your application to USCIS:

  USCIS Chicago Lockbox

  **U.S. Postal Service (USPS):**
  USCIS
  PO Box 805373
  Chicago, IL 60680

  **FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:**
  USCIS
  Attn: I-765 C03
  131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor
  Chicago, IL 60603-5517
USCIS Application Processing

- USCIS will send you a receipt notice, **Form I-797C, Notice of Action**, within 2-4 weeks of when your application is received.
  - This notice will assign your application a case number.
  - You can track the status of your application [online](#) for details about your application.
- If you need to change your address while your application is pending with USCIS, you must file form **AR-11, Change of Address** with USCIS to ensure they have the most up to date information.
  - You will also need to update the International Center if your physical address has changed by submitting an [Address Update](#) form.
• While your STEM OPT Application is Pending with USCIS, you are eligible to do the following:
  • Travel within the U.S.
  • Continue participating in employment for up to 180 days while your OPT STEM application is pending (based on employer’s discretion).
• While your OPT Application is Pending with USCIS, the International Center does NOT recommend the following:
  • Travel outside of the U.S. is not recommended when your application is pending with USCIS.
• Employer Changes
  • If you believe that your employer will change while your application for STEM OPT Extension is processing with USCIS, please contact the International Center at internationalcenter@uci.edu.
RECEIVING YOUR EAD FROM USCIS
EAD Card

- When you receive your Employment Authorization Document, commonly called the EAD card, you will have work eligibility based on the dates printed on your card.
  - If you notice any errors on your EAD card, please contact the International Center for assistance.
- Your employer will request a copy of your EAD card for their records to verify your continued eligibility to work in the U.S.
EMPLOYMENT REPORTING DURING STEM OPT
Reporting Changes During STEM OPT

- You are required to update the International Center if any of the changes below occur during STEM OPT.
- The [OPT Employment Update](#) form must be completed and submitted to the Student Request Upload Tool on the International Center website to report the following changes within 10 days:
  - Local Address
  - Employer Information Changes
  - Job Title Change
  - Change in Employment Status
- [I-983 Training Plan for Students](#)
I-983 Training Plan

- As a student participating in the STEM OPT 24-Month Extension, you are required to complete the form I-983 with your employer and update the International Center within 10 days of any changes.
  - Changes of the I-983 may include:
    - Any change of the employer’s Employer Identification Number, (i.e., the company’s Federal Tax ID number) resulting from a change in the employer’s ownership or structure.
    - Any reduction/increase in compensation that is not tied to a reduction in hours worked.
    - Any significant decrease in hours per week during STEM training opportunity.
    - Changes to the employer’s commitments or student’s learning objectives as documented on the Form I-983.
    - Employer’s name and address
    - Termination of employment
  - Evaluation Updates
    - This is a shared responsibility between the student (employee) and STEM OPT employer.
    - The “Evaluation on Student Progress” must be submitted after completing the first 12 months of the 24-Month STEM OPT period.
    - The “Final Evaluation on Student Progress” must be completed when you leave your employer, change your immigration status, or complete your 24-Month STEM OPT period.
Documenting the Direct Relationship

• When updating the International Center with an [OPT Employment Update](#) form, you must provide a detailed description of your practical training experience and how it directly relates to your degree.

• Below are examples about how to write this information; if you do not provide this information in a similar format, you may be asked to re-submit this for SEVIS compliance purposes.

  • **Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering**: I work full time as an Electrical Engineer at ABC Corp., a government contractor. In my job, I analyze client requirements for electrical systems and provide them with cost estimates of such systems. My work requires understanding of electrical circuit theory, which I studied in-depth at the University of ABC.

  • **Master's degree in Kinesiology**: I am working 25 hours a week in a health food store as a consultant for Self-Made Inc., designing and teaching exercise classes that are incorporated into a customer's overall nutrition and exercise plan. My designs and customer instruction draw upon my studies and classwork in exercise therapy and physical reconditioning.

  • **PhD in Computer Science**: I am employed as a Computer and Information Research Scientist at ABC Research Institute. I work as part of a team of scientists and engineers that designs experiments to test the operation of various software systems. My work builds on research in complex algorithms and machine learning, which I studied as part of my dissertation.
If you work with the same employer during your STEM OPT 24-Month Extension, you are required to report to the International Center every 6 months even if there are no new changes to report.

You can complete the information in the increments noted below and upload them to the Student Upload Request tool on the International Center website.

- **6 Month Reporting**
  - OPT Employment Update form
- **12-Month Reporting**
  - OPT Employment Update form
  - “Evaluation of Student Progress” (Page 5 of I-983 Training Plan for Students)
- **18-Month Reporting**
  - OPT Employment Update form
- **24-Month Reporting**
  - OPT Employment Update form
  - “Final Evaluation of Student Progress” (Page 5 of I-983 Training Plan for Students)
Employer Reporting to International Center

- Employer must work with students to report any of the following changes by completing the I-983 Training Plan for Students:
  - Employer name and address
  - Decrease in student's compensation
  - Change in hours worked
  - Employer's EIN
- Termination of employment
  - The student and employer must notify the International Center when your employment is terminated for any reason before the end of the authorized extension period.
  - The employer must report such a change in employment to the International Center no later than five business days after the student’s employment terminates or the student has departed.
If you used the SEVP Portal during Post-Completion OPT, you are still able to make the following changes:

- Address Updates
- Phone Number Updates

Additional Changes would require you to report to the International Center with updates using the OPT Employment Update form and submitting an updated I-983 Training Plan for Students.

You can learn more about SEVP Portal on the Study in the States website.