Optional Practical Training (OPT)
24-Month STEM Extension

MCCULLOCH CENTER FOR GLOBAL INITIATIVES

MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE

Are you eligible for the 24-month OPT STEM Extension?

Requirements:

- You must be a recipient of a U.S. Bachelor's, Master's or Doctoral degree in a STEM (science, technology, engineering, or math) designated degree program.

   See this list of approved [STEM Majors](). (You can check the CIP code listed on your I-20.)

- You are currently authorized for 12-month OPT and have not exceeded 90 days of unemployment

- Employed or have a job offer related to your field of study from an employer who is registered in the USCIS E-Verify Program. **Must complete Form I-983** with employer and all employers must have an EIN number.

- Your employer can work with you to fully complete the Form I-983 and abide by all employer obligations, including Dept. of Homeland Security Site visits.

- You are applying no more than 3 months before your 12-month OPT expires and no later than the expiration of your 12-month OPT.

   Two 24-month STEM extensions may be granted per lifetime.

Types of Allowable Employment

❖Must be a bona fide employee of the employer completing the Form I-983. The employer signing the I-983 must be the same entity to employ you and provide the practical training experience required by the I-983.

❖Multiple employer arrangements, sole proprietorships, employment through ''temp'' agencies, employment through consulting firm arrangements that provide labor for hire, and other relationships that do not constitute a bona fide employer-employee relationship are generally not supported.

❖Volunteer/Unpaid positions and self employment are NOT supported by the 24-Month OPT STEM Extension.

Application Process Overview

➤ Complete and submit the McCulloch Center's OPT STEM I-20 Request Form .

➤ Send the McCulloch Center your completed I-983 form (you can email it and then mail the original to us)

➤ After receiving these documents, we will review them and if complete, we will process your STEM extension I-20 form and will mail it to you along with detailed instructions on what you need to mail into the immigration service

➤ USCIS must receive your application within 60 days of the McCulloch Center preparing your new I-20 form.

➤ Prepare, collect & mail your application materials to USCIS.

➤ Allow approximately 1 week to gather and organize your materials for mailing. A complete application must be received by USCIS before the end date of your current OPT as noted on the EAD card.

➤ You must be in the United States to file the OPT STEM application with USCIS.

➤ Receive your STEM Extension Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

➤ Average processing time at the United States Citizenship and Immigrations Services (USCIS) is currently more than 90 days. However, you may continue to work on OPT for up to 180 days while the STEM application is pending.

➤ Maintain your F-1 status while on OPT STEM Extension.

➤ You must report general address and employer updates to McCulloch Center within 10 days of any change. 24 Month STEM Extension students must also submit a validation report every six months and training evaluations each 12 months. Find information about STEM Reporting here. Your I-20 travel endorsement is valid for only 6 months while on OPT STEM. Failure to provide timely updates may result in termination of the F-1 record.

Complete Form I-983

The formal training plan must clearly articulate the OPT STEM learning objectives and affirm the employer's commitment to helping you achieve those objectives. To fulfill this requirement, you and your employer must complete and sign [Form I-983](#) and then submit pages 1-5 to the McCulloch Center.

For more information, including a detailed tutorial and instructions see the [I-983 Overview](#) on the Study in the States website.

Complete I-983

You should use this information

One day after your current opt ends

This information can be found on your I-20 form under major information on the new version of the I-20 form or on page 3 on the old version.

This number is listed on your current EAD card under USCIS #

Click No

On page 1 of I-20 form

24 months from current opt end date

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

TRAINING PLAN FOR STEM OPT STUDENTS
Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) Optional Practical Training (OPT)

OMB CONTROL NO. 1653-0054
EXPIRATION DATE: 03/31/2019

SECTION 1: STUDENT INFORMATION (Completed by Student)

Student Name *(Surname/Primary Name, Given Name)*:

Student Email Address:

Name of School Recommending STEM OPT: Mount Holyoke College

Name of School Where STEM Degree Was Earned: Mount Holyoke College

SEVIS School Code of School Recommending STEM OPT (including 3-digit suffix): BOS214F00235000

Designated School Official (DSO) Name and Contact Information:
Jennifer Medina
McCulloch Center
50 College Street
South Hadley, MA
413-538-2072

Student SEVIS ID No.:

STEM OPT Requested Period: *(mm-dd-yyyy)*
From: _____ To: _____

Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code: _____ Example: Computer Science 11.0701
You can located the CIP codes under major on the new I-20 form

Level/Type of Qualifying Degree: ___ Bachelors

Date Awarded: *(mm-dd-yyyy)* ___ Graduation date

Based on Prior Degree? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Employment Authorization Number: ___ USCIS # on your current 12 month EAD card

SECTION 2: STUDENT 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 using any false document in the submission of this form.

I certify that:

1. I have reviewed, understand, and will adhere to this Training Plan for STEM OPT Students ("Plan");
2. I will notify the DSO at the earliest available opportunity if I believe that my employer is not providing me with appropriate training as delineated on this Plan;
3. I understand that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) may deny, revoke, or terminate the STEM OPT of students whom DHS determines are not engaging in OPT in compliance with the law, including the STEM OPT of students who are not, or whose employers are not, complying with this Plan;
4. My practical training opportunity is directly related to the STEM degree that qualifies me for the STEM OPT extension; and
5. I will notify the DSO at the earliest available opportunity regarding any material changes to or deviations from this Plan, including but not limited
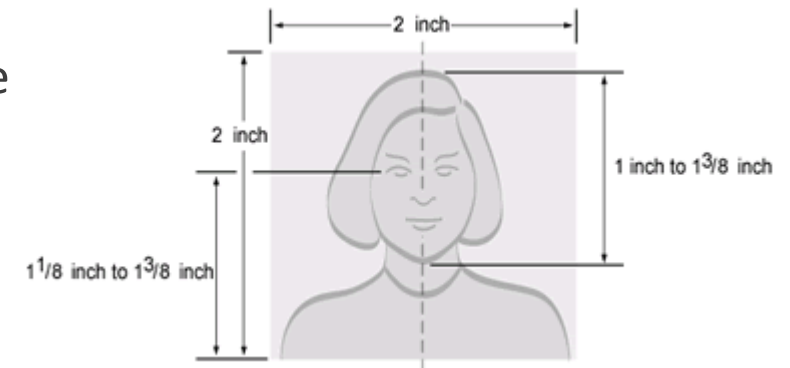
COMPLETE REST OF I-983 WITH YOUR EMPLOYER AND THEN SEND TO THE MCCULLOCH CENTER

Required Documents for USCIS

❑2 U.S. Passport Photos (with name and I-94 number written lightly in pencil on back of each) taken within the past 30 days.

❑Check or Money Order for $410 made payable to: "U.S. Department of Homeland Security." Or you can pay by credit card by attaching the Form I-1450

❑Original form I-765 (we will include this with your new STEM I-20 form)

❑Photocopy of OPT STEM I-20 that was issued by MHC within the past 60 days (pages 1-2). Don't forget to sign it!

❑Photocopy of your previous MHC I-20 showing the initial 12-month OPT.

❑Photocopy of current OPT EAD. If you still have the approval notice (Form I-797), attach a copy as well. Photocopy of passport biographical page and F-1 visa stamp, if applicable

❑Copy of electronic I-94 record. (The electronic I-94 record is available ONLY to those with passport admission stamp.)

❑ Proof of STEM Degree: Final Transcript (Preferred) or Photocopy of your diploma showing the major and degree level that makes you eligible for the STEM Extension.

❑You can also submit a G-1145 which will allow the immigration service to send you an email or text message when the accept your application. ATTACH TO THE TOP OF YOUR APPLICATION. THERE IS NO FEE TO USE THIS FORM

Photo Requirements

▪The photos required to use for the OPT application must meet the specifications of U.S. style passport photos. To see a full description of these specifications, go to the [U.S. Department of State web site](#).

▪Passport photos must be 2"x2" and taken within the past 30 days. They can not match your visa or passport identification page

▪Write name and I-94 number lightly on the back of each photo

▪USCIS has been examining passport photos more strictly. The McCulloch Center recommends having photos taken professionally (CVS, US Post Office)

Check or Money Order for USCIS

Use a personal check or money order made payable to "**U.S. Department of Homeland Security**"

❖ DO NOT send cash

❖ Money orders can be purchased at banks, post office and some local grocery stores.

❖ Make sure a name and address are printed on the check. If the address has changed, that is fine. Do not use "temporary checks" often issued by the bank when opening a new account. These checks have no name or address in the upper left hand corner.

❖ In the memo line, write your SEVIS ID number.

Mailing the OPT STEM Application

If using a mailing address in…

Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Guam, or the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands.

If sending by US Postal Service

USCIS
PO Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

For express mail: USCIS Attn: AOS 1820 E Skyharbor Circle S Suite 100 Phoenix, AZ 85034

Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, U.S. Virgin Islands, or West Virginia

If sending by US Postal Service

USCIS
PO Box 660867
Dallas, TX 75266

For express mail: USCIS Attn: AOS 2501 S. State Hwy 121 Business Suite 400 Lewisville, TX 75067

STEM Reporting Requirements

1. Report updated Address and Employer information within 10 days of any change

2. Complete 6 Month validation with the McCulloch Center (see next slide)

3. Report Material Changes to your I-983 form to the McCulloch Center within 10 days. Material Changes 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 in your compensation that is not tied to a reduction in hours worked.

   ◦ Any significant decrease in hours per week that you engage in a STEM training opportunity.

   ◦ Changes to the employer's commitments or your learning objectives as documented on the Form I-983.

   ◦ Update in Material Changes via a revised I-983 needs to be submitted to the McCulloch Center within 10 business days.

4. Annual Evaluation of Student Progress due at 12 and 24 Months

6 Month Validation

- STEM OPT students must submit a validation report to the McCulloch Center every six months starting from the date the 24-month extension begins and ending when the student's F-1 status ends. This can be done by completing the [6 Month Validation Report](#)

- Your F-1 record may be terminated if you fail to report each 6 months.

- Check your STEM start date and mark your calendar for each 6 month interval of your STEM Extension for your reporting deadlines. (example: your STEM Extension Starts June 1, 2018. You must submit 6 month validations on December 1, 2018, on June 1, 2019, on December 1, 2019 and submit your final evaluation on last day of employment.)

- Be sure to check email reminders from the McCulloch Center

Annual Evaluation

❖ You must submit Form I-983 page 5 "Evaluation of Student Progress" to the McCulloch Center each 12 months and/or any time you leave an employer.

❖ Your employer must review and sign the self evaluation to attest to the accuracy.

❖ Your F-1 record may be terminated if you fail to submit your evaluations.

❖ Check your STEM start date and mark your calendar for each 12 month interval of your STEM Extension for your reporting deadlines. (Example: Your STEM Extension Starts June 1, 2018. You must submit an annual evaluation June 1, 2019, and a final evaluation by June 1, 2020)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

About Employment

What is considered full-time employment on the 24- month OPT STEM Extension? Students must work over 20 hours per week for an E-Verify employer in a position directly related to the STEM degree, following the goals and objectives stated in the I-983 training plan.

I have two part-time jobs. One of the employers is enrolled in E-Verify but the other is not. Is this allowed?
No, only full time employment is allowed at your STEM-eligible E-Verify registered employer.

How many days of unemployment am I allowed while on the 24-month STEM Extension?
Students who receive a 24-month OPT STEM extension are given an additional 60 days of unemployment for a total of 150 days over their entire post completion OPT period.

What counts as unemployment?
Each day during the period when OPT authorization begins and ends that the student does not have qualifying employment counts as a day of unemployment. Time spent outside the United States, if not employed by a U.S. employer, is counted towards the 150-day period of unemployment.

Can I continue to work while my 24-month STEM Extension OPT is pending?
If a student's EAD expires while the STEM Extension application is pending, the student is authorized to work until USCIS makes a decision about the application, but not more than 180 days from the date the student's initial OPT EAD expires.

What documents should I present to my employer once my 12-month OPT expires and my OPT STEM is pending?
The student should present the employer with the expired EAD card, the form I-20 recommending the student for STEM Extension, and proof of the timely filing with USCIS.

Can I switch employers while my OPT STEM application is pending?
Yes, but we do NOT recommend this. You must submit a new OPT 24-Month STEM Request and I-983 to the McCulloch Center. We will update your information and send the appropriate documentation to the service center handing your application.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)-
on travel and re entry

Can I travel outside the US during my approved OPT period?

Yes. However, if the student whose approved period of OPT has started travels outside of the US while unemployed, the time spent outside the United States will count as unemployment against the 90/150-day limits

*If a student travels while employed either during a period of leave authorized by an employer or as part of their employment, the time spent outside the US will not count as unemployment.

Can I travel outside the US while my 24-month STEM Extension OPT is pending?

Yes, travel while your OPT STEM application is pending is allowed if your current OPT is **still valid (your EAD card has not expired)**, have a valid F-1 visa and I-20 signed within the past 6 months. You should travel with a copy of your I-797 receipt notice and proof of your STEM employment. You should not travel outside the US if your STEM OPT application is pending and your EAD for your first 12 months of OPT has expired.

Can I renew my visa while on OPT STEM?

Yes, you are eligible to renew your visa while on OPT STEM. Remember, that you are still applying for an F-1 non-immigrant visa which means you must demonstrate ties to your home country. Be advised that you MUST have an approved STEM EAD to apply for a new visa. If you have any questions about renewing your visa, please contact the McCulloch Center.

What documents do I need to re-enter the U.S?

If you are eligible for travel, you will need:
- A valid passport with unexpired F-1 visa stamp (if applicable)
- Form I-20, signed on page 2 by Jenny Or Donna within the last 6 months
- Unexpired EAD Card.
- Proof of employment (or employment offer)