



# STEM OPT Extension Application



**HARVARD**  
International Office

F-1 Students  
Spring 2024





Today's webinar is based on government regulations and guidance as of March 2024. The information provided during this webinar is to be used in conjunction with the material provided to you on the HIO website, HIO informational emails and subsequent HIO materials received during the application process.

This webinar will NOT include information about applying for STEM OPT based on a prior degree. For more information, please contact your HIO advisor directly.

**DISCLAIMER**



This session will cover frequently asked questions regarding the STEM OPT extension application process. If you have questions during the presentation, please use the Q&A function to submit your question. We will answer as many questions as we can at the end of the session.

If we are unable to answer your question by the end of the webinar, please reach out to your HIO advisor.





# What is STEM?

STEM OPT is a benefit for eligible F-1 students to work off-campus for an additional 24-months after their Post-Completion OPT in a field directly related to their major area of study.

Students who have completed degrees in a STEM designated field are eligible to apply for this extension.





# Am I in a STEM eligible program?

## STEM Designated Degree Program List Effective May 10, 2016

The STEM Designated Degree Program list is a complete list of fields of study that DHS considers to be science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) fields of study for purposes of the 24-month STEM optional practical training extension described at 8 CFR 214.2(f). Under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(C)(2), a STEM field of study is a field of study "included in the Department of Education's Classification of Instructional Programs taxonomy within the two-digit series containing engineering, biological sciences, mathematics, and physical sciences, or a related field. In general, related fields will include fields involving research, innovation, or development of new technologies using engineering, mathematics, computer science, or natural sciences (including physical, biological, and agricultural sciences)."

Accordingly, this list designates the following four CIP summary groups/series at the 2-digit CIP code level: Engineering (CIP code 14), Biological and Biomedical Sciences (CIP code 26), Mathematics and Statistics (CIP code 27), and Physical Sciences (CIP code 40). Any new additions to those areas will automatically be included on this STEM Designated Degree Program list. Consistent with the definition of "related field" above, related fields in this list include fields involving research, innovation, or development of new technologies using engineering, mathematics, computer science, or natural sciences. DHS designates these fields at the 6-digit level.

CIP Code Two-Digit Series	2010 CIP Code	CIP Code Title
01	01.0308	Agroecology and Sustainable Agriculture
01	01.0901	Animal Sciences, General
01	01.0902	Agricultural Animal Breeding
01	01.0903	Animal Health
01	01.0904	Animal Nutrition
01	01.0905	Dairy Science
01	01.0906	Livestock Management
01	01.0907	Poultry Science
01	01.0999	Animal Sciences, Other
01	01.1001	Food Science
01	01.1002	Food Technology and Processing

*Your CIP code on the front page of your I-20 must be on the government STEM Designated Degree Program List.*

### PROGRAM OF STUDY

#### EDUCATION LEVEL

MASTER'S

#### PROGRAM ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Required

#### START OF CLASSES

27 AUGUST 2018

#### MAJOR 1

Information Science/Studies 11.0401

#### ENGLISH PROFICIENCY NOTES

Student is proficient

#### PROGRAM START/END DATE

27 AUGUST 2018 - 20 DECEMBER 2019

#### MAJOR 2

None 00.0000

#### EARLIEST ADMISSION DATE

28 JULY 2018



# Requirements for STEM OPT Employment

1. Job must be a paid job, for at least 20 hours per week at each STEM employer.
2. Must work for an E-Verify employer.
3. Must be a position related to the STEM program major listed under “Program of Study” on the I-20.
  - You are responsible for drawing a connection between your position and the skills or knowledge learned in your STEM degree.
4. You must be paid a salary, and be supervised, directly by your employer. You cannot be paid by a third party or staffing agency, or work at a location other than your employer’s place of business.
  - For more information, please see “The Employer’s Training Obligation: Staffing and Temporary Agencies” on the USCIS Website.







# Requirements for STEM OPT Employment (continued)

- 5) Cannot be self-employed.
- 6) If working for more than one employer, each position must meet all of the previously mentioned STEM criteria.
- 7) In an academic environment, you cannot be paid through an external fellowship. For example, you cannot use STEM for a postdoctoral position in which you are not paid directly by the host institution.
- 8) You must not have more than 150 days of unemployment time during the entire period of post-completion OPT (regular post-completion OPT and 24-month extension combined).





You have a 90-day window to submit the STEM application to USCIS:

- You may submit the application as early as 90 days prior to the end date of your regular OPT period.
- Your STEM application must be received prior to the end date of regular OPT period.

You must submit the STEM application to USCIS within 60 days of the HIO processing your STEM recommendation.

This means that ideally, you should submit the STEM request to the HIO 3.5 months prior to the end date of your regular OPT period.

- It will take the HIO 10 business days to review your STEM documents and issue the new I-20. If you submit the STEM application to the HIO less than 1 month prior to the end date of your OPT, you risk not having sufficient time to submit your application to USCIS.

Please note: You must be physically present in the U.S. to apply for STEM

**When to  
Apply**





# 3 Step Process

**Step 1: Coordinate with employer and complete STEM I-983 Training Plan.**

**Step 2: Submit STEM I-20 request request to HIO. HIO must recommend you for STEM extension and issue new I-20!**

**Step 3: Submit your STEM Extension application to USCIS.**





# Step 1: Coordinate with Employer to Prepare: I-983

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

OMB APPROVAL NO. 1653-0054  
EXPIRATION DATE: 5/31/2025

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

SECTION 1: STUDENT INFORMATION (Completed by Student)			
Student Name (Surname/Primary Name, Given Name):		Student Email Address:	
Name of School Recommending STEM OPT:	Name of School Where STEM Degree Was Earned:	SEVIS School Code of School Recommending STEM OPT (including 3-digit suffix):	
Designated School Official (DSO) Name and Contact Information:		Student SEVIS ID No.:	STEM OPT Requested Period (mm-dd-yyyy): From: _____ To: _____
Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code: _____			
Level/Type of Qualifying Degree: _____			
Date Awarded (mm-dd-yyyy): _____			
Based on Prior Degree? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Employment Authorization Number: _____			
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 to, any change of Employer Identification Number resulting from a corporate restructuring, any nontrivial reduction in compensation from the amount previously submitted on the Plan that is not tied to a reduction in hours worked, any significant decrease in hours per week that I engage in a STEM training opportunity, and any decrease in hours below the 20-hours-per-week minimum required under this rule.			
Signature of Student: _____			
Printed Name of Student: _____		Date (mm-dd-yyyy): _____	

- 5-page document that is an essential part of the STEM OPT Extension.
- You and your employer must keep the most updated I-983 in your records at all times.
- Please refer to the I-983 guide on the HIO's website for assistance filling out the I-983.
- Both you and your employer are required to sign it.
- The training plan includes information such as your work site address, salary, hours, supervisor information, the job details, goals and objectives, and evaluations.





# HIO STEM I-20 Request Preparation: I-983

- This document is not sent with your STEM application to USCIS; however, it is a VITAL part of your STEM OPT work authorization. This document will continue to be reviewed throughout your 24-month STEM OPT extension.
- The HIO cannot issue your STEM OPT recommendation until the I-983 is reviewed for completeness.

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

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Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) Optional Practical Training (OPT)

SECTION 1: STUDENT INFORMATION (Completed by Student)			
Student Name (Surname/Primary Name, Given Name):		Student Email Address:	
Name of School Recommending STEM OPT:	Name of School Where STEM Degree Was Earned:	SEVIS School Code of School Recommending STEM OPT (including 3-digit suffix):	
Designated School Official (DSO) Name and Contact Information:		Student SEVIS ID No.:	STEM OPT Requested Period (mm-dd-yyyy): From: _____ To: _____
Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code: _____			
Level/Type of Qualifying Degree: _____			
Date Awarded (mm-dd-yyyy): _____			
Based on Prior Degree? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Employment Authorization Number: _____			
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 to, any change of Employer Identification Number resulting from a corporate restructuring, any nontrivial reduction in compensation from the amount previously submitted on the Plan that is not tied to a reduction in hours worked, any significant decrease in hours per week that I engage in a STEM training opportunity, and any decrease in hours below the 20-hours-per-week minimum required under this rule.			
Signature of Student: _____			
Printed Name of Student: _____ Date (mm-dd-yyyy): _____			





# HIO STEM I-20 Request Preparation: I-983

- There are two places that reflect “Employer Addresses”
- The first place on page 2 of the I-983 should reflect your company’s main headquarters.
- The second place on page 3 of the I-983 should reflect where you are physically performing the STEM OPT duties/employment as these may be different.

SECTION 3: EMPLOYER INFORMATION (Completed by Employer)			
Employer Name:		Street Address:	Suite:
Employer Website URL:		City:	State: ZIP Code:
Employer ID Number (EIN):	Number of Full-Time Employees in U.S.:	North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Code:	
OPT Hours Per Week (must be at least 20 hours/week):	Compensation:		
Start Date of Employment (mm-dd-yyyy):	A. Salary Amount and Frequency:		
	B. Other Compensation (Type and Estimated Amount or Value):		
	1.		
	2.		
	3.		
	4.		

SECTION 5: TRAINING PLAN FOR STEM OPT STUDENTS (Completed by Student and Employer)	
Student Name (Surname/Primary Name, Given Name):	
Employer Name:	
EMPLOYER SITE INFORMATION	
Site Name:	Site Address (Street, City, State, ZIP):
Name of Official:	Official's Title:
Official's Email:	Official's Phone Number:



# HIO STEM I-20 Request Preparation: Common Mistakes

Information on the STEM Extension Request Form and Form I-983 do not match



- Employer Identification Number (EIN)
- Start dates – the start date listed on both forms should be the start of your employment on STEM OPT extension and NOT Post-OPT

No OPT employer information in SEVIS



- Make sure your post-completion OPT employer information in SEVIS is up-to-date. You must report your employer information via the HIO's Post-Completion OPT Reporting Form.
- Use the SEVP Portal to review your employment information in SEVIS

No E-Verify number included in the HIO's online STEM Request Form



- If your employer does not want to share the E-Verify number, they must provide a formal letter on letterhead confirming that their company is enrolled in the E-Verify program. You must submit this letter with your other materials to the HIO.





# Step 2: Submit request to HIO

Submit your STEM OPT Request through the HIO's web-based application and upload:

[Home](#) > [Forms](#) > [For Students](#) > [F-1 STEM OPT Application Forms](#) >

## HIO STEM OPT Request Form

[ACCESS THE REQUEST FORM HERE](#)

Students must submit the above electronic form to the HIO to request an I-20 with a STEM OPT recommendation. The form will require that students upload the following documents:

1. **Form I-983.** (Use the **HIO's instructions to complete the I-983**)
2. Copy of your current **OPT EAD** card
3. A copy of your **I-94 record**.
4. Payment of \$300 to Harvard University. You may make this payment **online with a credit card**.

*Students applying for STEM based on a previous degree will need to upload some additional documents. The online request form will walk you through the process.*



# HIO STEM I-20 Request Preparation: HIO Online Request Form

After reviewing the CIP code definition of your degree, please describe how the position draws on knowledge gained and developed during your academic program in 2-3 sentences. For example, you may cite specific coursework; dissertation or thesis research; or lab work that has provided you with fundamental knowledge you use in your job duties. ***NB: The HIO is required to enter this information in your SEVIS record. Failure to provide adequate information in this section will delay the HIO in issuing your STEM I-20.***

The web-based HIO STEM Request Form includes a section where you must explain how your job is related to your program of study. This should only be a few sentences, but it is important that you are clear and specific.





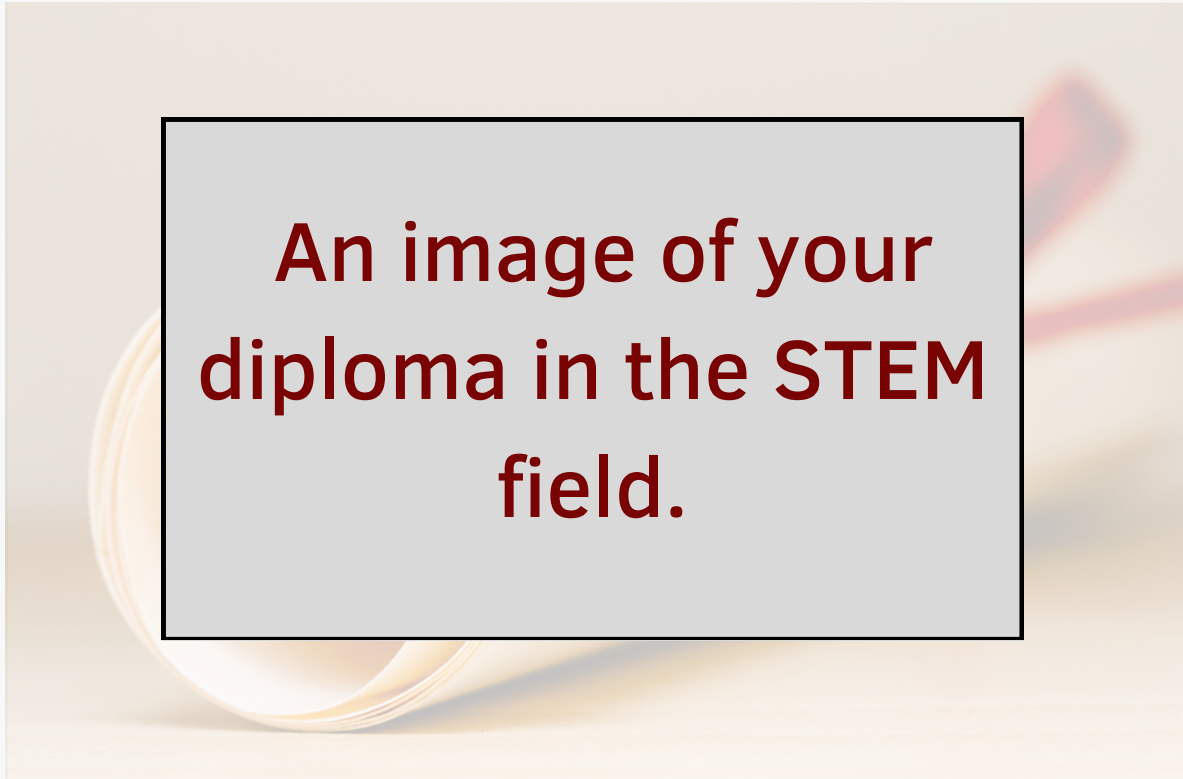
# Application Preparation: Gather Remaining Documents

While your STEM I-20 request is pending with the HIO, take this time to prepare additional documents for your application to USCIS:

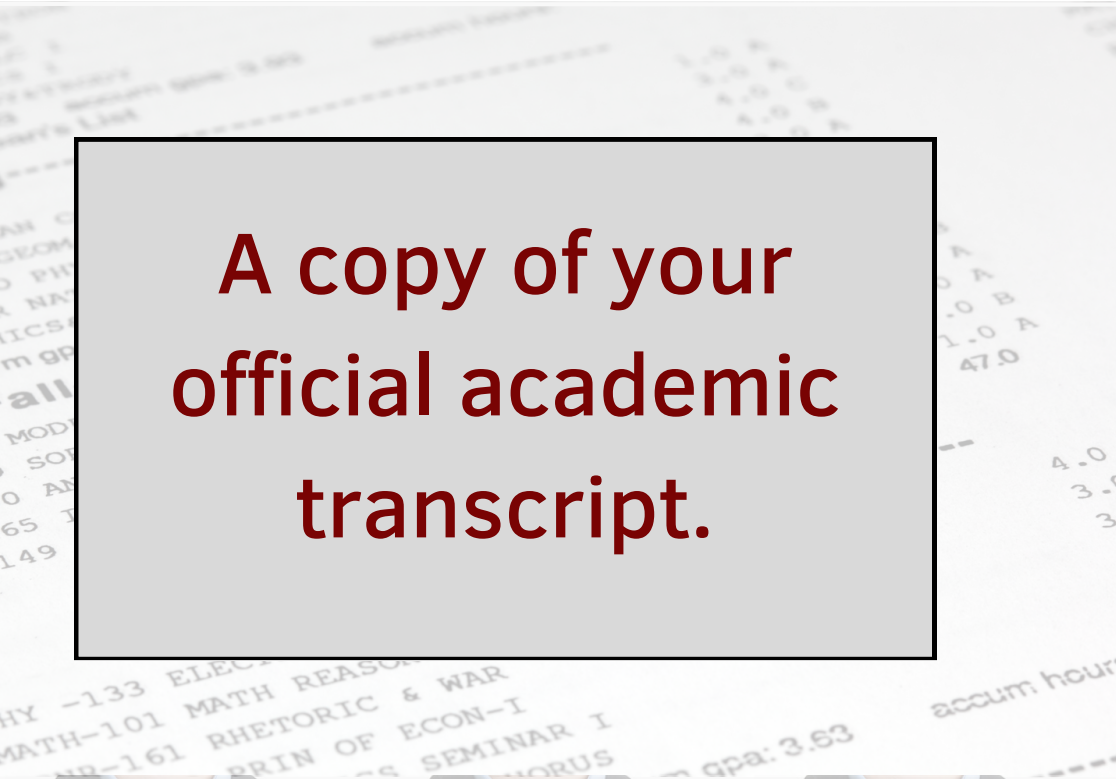
A copy of the biographical page of your passport.

A copy of your official academic transcript.

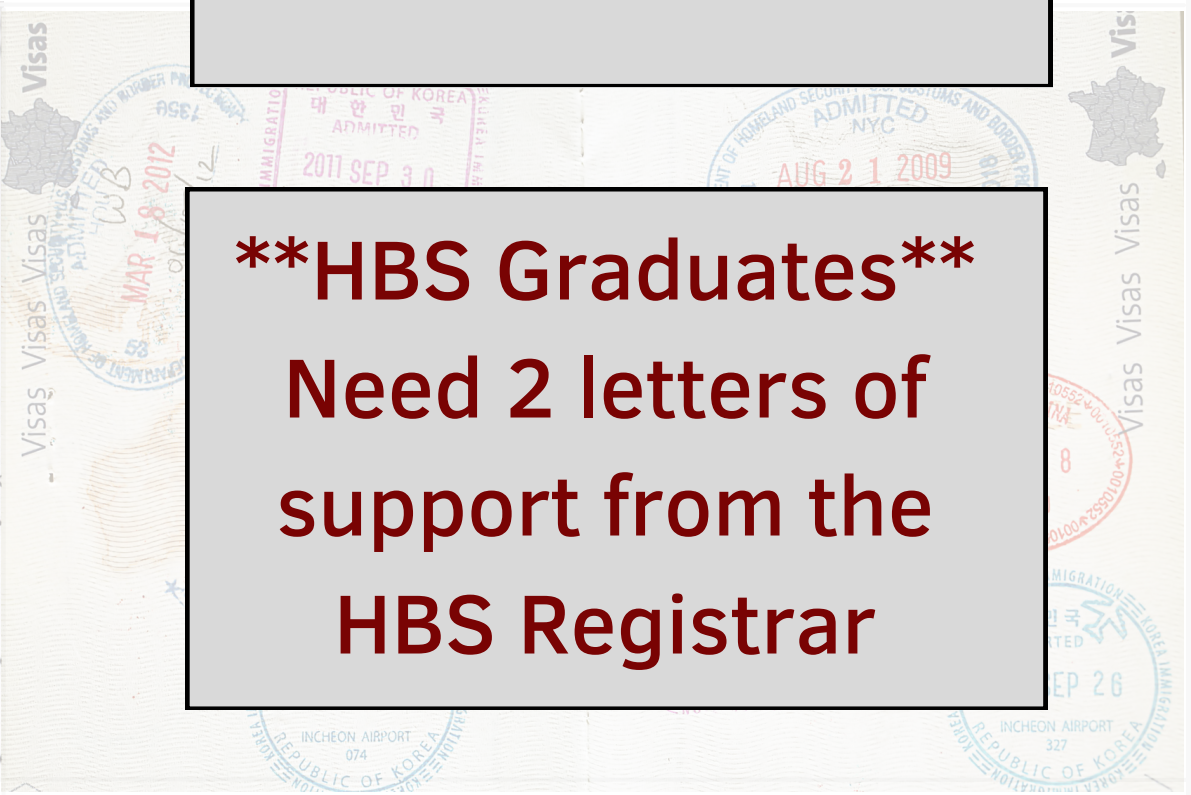
**\*\*HBS Graduates\*\***  
Need 2 letters of support from the HBS Registrar



An image of your diploma in the STEM field.



Passport photos (not previously used)



A clear image of your most current I-94 record.







# Step 3: Prepare and Submit your USCIS STEM Extension Application

- HIO will EMAIL you the I-20 recommending you for the STEM OPT period.
- You must print a copy of the STEM I-20 the HIO sends to you via email, and PHYSICALLY sign the STEM I-20 in blue ink. USCIS allows universities to digitally sign I-20s, but students are required to manually sign their I-20s.

**IMPORTANT:**  
STUDENTS **CANNOT**  
APPLY FOR THE STEM  
EXTENSION UNTIL THEY  
HAVE RECEIVED THE  
STEM I-20 FROM THEIR  
UNIVERSITY

If you digitally/electronically sign your I-20, or if you submit your application to USCIS without your STEM I-20, your application will be rejected or denied.





# Step 3: Application Preparation

In addition to your new STEM I-20, the HIO will send links to the resources:

- HIO USCIS e-Filing I-765 STEM OPT Application Guide
- USCIS STEM OPT Application Checklist
- STEM OPT Instructions and Reporting Worksheet
- After Submitting your STEM OPT Application to USCIS

It is extremely important that you read the instructions carefully and follow all the necessary steps to complete and submit your application to USCIS.



# Step 3: Submit application to USCIS



Your final application to USCIS must include:

- 01 **Signed new STEM I-20** from the HIO
- 02 Clear picture of front and back of **Post-completion OPT EAD**
- 03 **Most recent I-94**
  - Be sure that this I-94 reflects your most recent entry to the U.S. at the time you submit your STEM application to USCIS
- 04 Clear picture of **biographical page of passport**
- 05 Passport **photo**
- 06 Clear picture of **official transcript\***  
\*Refer to checklist if your school requires additional academic STEM documentation
- 07 Clear picture of **diploma**
- 08 Most recent Department of Homeland Security **fee**





# Step 3: Submitting Application to USCIS

What is your eligibility category?

**⚠** You can file your request online only for certain eligibility categories

If your eligibility category does not appear on the drop-down list, you must file a paper [Form I-765](#). If you submit online and are not eligible for one of the listed categories, your application may be denied.

(a)(12) Temporary Protected Status Granted

(c)(3)(A) Student Pre-Completion OPT

(c)(3)(B) Student Post-Completion OPT

(c)(3)(C) STEM Extension

(c)(19) Temporary Protected Status Pending

**e-Filing Form I-765:**

**<https://myaccount.uscis.gov/>**

**HIO OPT USCIS e-Filing guide:**

**<https://hio.harvard.edu/stem-opt-i-765-instructions>**



# What to Expect After Filing Your STEM OPT Application



After e-filing your STEM OPT application with USCIS, you should receive **three (3) pieces of mail** from USCIS:

- An I-797 Notice of Receipt (you will also receive a copy of this in your USCIS account immediately after e-filing your application);
- An I-797 Notice of Approval;
- The official STEM EAD card.

***Review the information carefully on all documents.***

**Contact your HIO advisor immediately if:**

- You do not receive your USCIS I-797 Notice of Receipt within 60 days of submitting your STEM application;
- Your name is misspelled on your I-797 Notice of Receipt, I-797 Notice of Approval, or STEM EAD;
- You receive a Request For Additional Evidence (RFE) from USCIS.



# What to Expect After Filing Your STEM OPT Application



STEM OPT is an **EXTENSION** of your post-OPT work authorization. Because it is an extension, some benefits come along with the STEM OPT period after timely filing your case with USCIS.

After your STEM OPT is filed with USCIS **BEFORE** your current post-OPT expiration date, you can...

- Continue working even after Post-OPT EAD expiration date by showing your employer your official I-765 STEM OPT receipt notice
- Work authorization is automatically extended for **180 days** after Post-OPT EAD card expiration date.
- Travel and reentry to U.S. even renewing F-1 visa stamp can happen while STEM OPT is still pending
- See [HIO STEM OPT Travel](#) section/tab on HIO website





# Q & A





# Thank you for joining us!

**Virtual Advisor-on-Call via Zoom:**

**<https://www.hio.harvard.edu/office-hours>**

**HIO Advisor Appointment:**

**HIO Website > Contact Us > Make an Appointment Online**