



Hiring an International Student

STEM Extension Optional Practical Training (OPT)

What is STEM OPT?

STEM Extension Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a program that allows international students with certain degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) to gain practical work experience in the United States for up to 36 months after the completion of their degree. (Students work for 12 months on Post-Completion OPT and can apply for an additional 24 months of work authorization called STEM OPT.)

Cost & Processing Time

The student pays USCIS an application fee for the EAD card. USCIS processing time for the EAD card is approximately 3 months.

Limits on hours/week

Students on STEM OPT must work a minimum of 20 hrs/wk.



Employer Role

Employers who wish to hire an international student on STEM OPT must be enrolled in U.S. Citizen and Immigration Service's (USCIS) eVerify system and provide the student with a structured and supervised work experience that is directly related to their degree. Employers must work with the student to complete the I-983 Training Plan and provide employer attestation (i.e., signatures) on their own behalf.



Student Role

Students will work with the employer to complete the I-983 Training Plan. The form is required to determine a student's eligibility for STEM OPT and will be submitted to ISSA with other documents. Once eligibility is determined, the student will be issued a new I-20 recommending the student for STEM OPT. The student will then apply through USCIS for the STEM OPT EAD card.

Reporting Requirements

While on STEM OPT, the student works with their employer to keep the training plan current and report any changes.

Students must report to ISSA their participation in STEM OPT every 6 months from the start date on the EAD card. A self-evaluation must be completed by the student and signed off by the employer at the end of the first year and the second year. The self-evaluation is also due when a student leaves employment and/or changes their immigration status. If a student ceases employment, the employer must notify ISSA, in writing, within 5 days of the student's departure.

For more information on employing international students, contact International Student Advising.



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