UC RIVERSIDE | International Students and Scholars

STEM OPT Application Checklist

Application Filing Window

USCIS can accept your application 90 days before your OPT EAD End Date and must be received by USCIS before your OPT EAD card expires. Applying outside of the application window will result in a denied application.

STEM OPT Application Steps

1. Request an OPT I-20 from the ISS Office. Please gather the following items and email them to internationalstudents@ucr.edu. Please allow 7-10 business days for an ISS Advisor/DSO to review your documents to determine if you are eligible to apply for OPT.

- ☐ Form I-983 Training Plan (Completed by you and your employer), I-983 Remains with ISS & does not go to USCIS
  - I-983 Instructions
  - I-983 Sample
- ☐ Do NOT submit an I-765 to USCIS until you receive an OPT I-20 from the ISS Office
- ☐ Employment Verification Letter or Job Offer Letter (includes title and job description)
- ☐ Copy of your OPT EAD (Front & Back)

2. Pay $300.00 ISS STEM OPT Fee. ISS will review your OPT STEM packet. Once ISS has determined that you are eligible to apply for STEM OPT, ISS will provide you with ISS OPT Fee payment instructions.

3. Receive your STEM OPT I-20 from the ISS Office. Once you have paid the OPT STEM Fee and submitted your payment receipt to ISS, an ISS Advisor will email your STEM OPT I-20 to your UCR email. Please review your STEM OPT I-20 and sign it at the bottom. If you would like to meet with an ISS Advisor to review your documents, please reach out to internationalstudents@ucr.edu.

4. Gather Final STEM OPT (I-765) Application Documents to Submit to USCIS. Please be sure to submit your documents to USCIS within the application window and within 60 days of the date that the International Student Advisor entered your OPT recommendation into SEVIS. Here are the documents that USCIS will require:

- ☐ STEM OPT I-20 (MUST BE ISSUED BEFORE THE I-765 IS SUBMITTED TO USCIS)
  - The STEM OPT I-20 must have OPT Recommendation from a DSO on the 2nd page. STEM OPT recommendation is required before the I-765 Application is submitted to USCIS.
  - The STEM OPT I-20 must be submitted to USCIS within 60 days of issuance
- ☐ Passport Photo
  - Digital Copy of a U.S. Passport style photo
- ☐ Government Identification
  - Copy of your OPT EAD (Front & Back)
- ☐ Digital copy of a valid passport
- ☐ Copy of either your STEM Degree Transcripts or Diploma
  - Your Major on your I-20 Must be on the STEM Designation Degree List
- ☐ If your STEM Degree was earned at a different institution, include that Institution's Accreditation

- ☐ Form I-94
- ☐ Supporting Documents (if applicable): Copies of previous CPT I-20, OPT I-20, EAD card, I-20 with different SEVIS ID number, or others
- ☐ $470 USCIS I-765 Fee (Review USCIS Fee Schedule for any Fee Changes)
    - Credit Card or Electronic Bank Transfer
- ☐ Optional USCIS Premium Processing Fee (Review USCIS Fee Schedule for any Fee Changes)
    - Decisions on OPT applications are made within 30 days of submission.

5. **Filing the I-765 Online**
    - **REMINDER:** You must first receive the OPT I-20 from the ISS Office
    - Step One: Create a myUSCIS Account (if you don't already have an account)
    - Step Two: Click on 'File a form online' & select 'I-765, Application for Employment Authorization'
    - Step Three: Enter all information, upload required documents & submit
6. **After Submitting the STEM OPT Application to USCIS**
    - USCIS will issue an OPT Receipt Number in your myUSCIS portal and mail you a paper I-797 Receipt Notice
    - You may continue working in your current STEM position up to 180 days after your OPT EAD expires while your STEM Extension is Pending.
    - You can track your case through your online USCIS account
    - Within Approximately 3-5 Months: USCIS will make the final OPT decision
        - If USCIS sends you a Request for Evidence (RFE) or a Denial Notice, please make an appointment with an ISS advisor internationalstudents@ucr.edu
        - Please be advised that USCIS is no longer accepting self-submitted photos for OPT and other applications. You should still submit a photo if the directions on the form advise you to do so; however, you should also expect to get a notice from USCIS directing you to go to a USCIS Application Support Center at an appointed time to have your photo taken. They may also ask for biometrics (fingerprints, etc.).
        - If your OPT is approved, USCIS will deliver your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) Card to your mailing address.
            - Send scan of EAD Card to ISS internationalstudents@ucr.edu

After STEM OPT Approval

- **Set up Your SEVP OPT Portal**

  During STEM OPT, F-1 Students will only be able to use the SEVP OPT Portal to update personal information, not employment information. Any changes in employment information must be updated through the ISS Office. The OPT Portal will send reminders of due dates of reports. Any Validation Reports or Self-Evaluation must be submitted through the ISS Office internationalstudents@ucr.edu. You must report any changes **within 10 days** of that change.

- **STEM OPT Reporting Requirements**

  All STEM OPT Reports must be submitted to ISS internationalstudents@ucr.edu before the due date of report. Once received, an ISS Advisor will submit the report into the SEVIS system.

- **6 Months on STEM OPT** → Submit STEM OPT Reporting Form
- **12 Months on STEM OPT** → Submit STEM OPT Reporting Form and Evaluation of Student Progress (1st portion of page 5 on Form I-983)
- **18 Months on STEM OPT** → Submit STEM OPT Reporting Form
- **24 Months on STEM OPT** → Submit STEM OPT Reporting Form **and** Entire I-983 with Completed Evaluation of Student Progress (2nd portion of page 5 on Form I-983)
- **Changes in Personal or Employment Information (Must be Reported within 10 Days of Change)**
  - **Change of Employer** → Must Submit I-983 Final Evaluation of Previous Employer, New I-983 of New Employer & Offer Letter of New Employer
  - **Change of Personal Address or Contact Information** → Update through SEVP OPT Portal

Paper Filing Application | USCIS Instructions

On April 1, 2024, USCIS raised the fee for the paper filing option to **$520** and the online filing option to **$470**. We recommend using the online application as it is a more cost effective option in addition to providing you the ability to track your application immediately after it's submitted.