How to Apply for STEM OPT Extension Checklist

Step 1: Know your stuff!!

- ☐ Understand what the STEM OPT Extension is! Are you eligible? When can you apply? Visit https://www.bellevue.edu/student-support/international-services/work-permits and watch the Employment Workshops in Blackboard for details. Meet with a DSO in ISS if you have questions.
- ☐ Know the time frame!
    - o **Start Early:** ISS processing can take up to 2 weeks & **USCIS processing can take 2-5 months.** Students may apply for the STEM OPT extension **up to 90 days** before the expiration date on their 12-month OPT EAD card. STEM OPT applications must be receipted by the USCIS by the expiration date on the OPT EAD card. You may request and receive your OPT I-20 earlier than 90 days before the EAD expiration date, but you must not submit your application to USCIS until you have entered the 90-day window.
- ☐ NOTE: Self-Employment and employment through "temp" agencies or consulting firm arrangements that provide labor for hire **DO NOT** quality for STEM OPT

IMPORTANT: Do NOT file your OPT application with USCIS if you have not received your STEM OPT Recommendation I-20 AND you have entered the valid window of time described above.

Step 2: Gather the required documents

- ☐ Complete the **Training Plan Form I-983** (*both student & employer*)
    - o Download from https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/i983.pdf
    - o To be completed by both the student and employer.
    - o **All fields through Section 6 MUST be completed entirely** (Page 5 should not be completed at this time and should be used later for self-evaluations while on STEM)
    - o For tips, refer to I-983 Training Plan Tips or the STEM OPT Help Hub
    - o Employers may also reference the *Form I-983 Tutorial* or *Form I-983 Instructions* accessible from https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub under "Employer Resources"
- ☐ Print the STEM Employer Verification Form and have your employer sign it
- ☐ Proof of STEM degree (you will need to have either an official transcript, unofficial transcript, **or** your Bellevue University diploma)
- ☐ All previously issued Employment Authorization Documents (EADs) - *(front and back)*
- ☐ Passport page(s) showing your name, photo, and expiration
- ☐ Most recent Electronic I-94 record (https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov); or paper I-94 card (front and back)
- ☐ Visa (most recently used when last entering the U.S.)
- ☐ Any previously-issued OPT or CPT I-20s (including those from other schools)

ISS recommends online filing. If you choose to apply by mail, additional documents and fees will apply. Please request more details from ISS if you plan to file by mail.

Step 3: Submit All Documents & Make an Appointment with ISS

Once you've prepared all documents from Step 2, set up an appointment with a DSO in ISS:

- Send an email to your DSO in ISS (if you don't know who your DSO is, please email iss@bellevue.edu). In the body of the email, let us know that you have all documents prepared for the OPT application and are requesting an appointment. See step 4 for details on the STEM OPT Appointment. Please understand that ISS **cannot** process STEM OPT applications on a drop-in basis. However, if you prefer, you can drop in to see if an advisor is available for general questions and set up an appointment with them in person.

Step 4: Come prepared to your ISS STEM OPT appointment

During your appointment, a DSO in ISS verifies your F-1 status and STEM OPT eligibility. A STEM OPT I-20 will be created if you are eligible. **Your OPT I-20 request will not be finalized until you complete this appointment. Do NOT file your OPT application if you have not been issued a STEM OPT Recommendation I-20!**

BEFORE YOUR APPOINTMENT

1. **Log in to your myUSCIS account and start a draft of your application –** Go to https://my.uscis.gov/ to start your draft. *If you do not have a draft already started before the appointment, ISS may not be able to review this* for you during your appointment.* Start your draft by selecting "File a Form Online" once signed in (you can find this under "My Account" in the top right). Select I-765 as the form and select "C-3-C STEM Extension" as the eligibility category. **Do not submit the application until after your appointment!** Complete as much as possible and come to your appointment with any questions.
2. Complete the **OPT 24-Month Responsibilities Acknowledgement Form** via DocuSign (sent by ISS through email).

BRING TO YOUR APPOINTMENT

- ☐ **All documents listed in step 2**
- ☐ **Payment Method - $470 to USCIS** (Credit or debit card OR Bank Account and Routing Numbers)
- ☐ **Passport style photograph** *taken within 30 days* (US passport photo guidelines) – For the online application, you will need a digital copy. Be sure to request JPEG or PNG format.
- ☐ Bring your **laptop** (in-person meetings) or **be prepared to share your screen** (zoom meetings).
  - If you choose not to have a review of your form I-765*, please let the DSO know this during the meeting.

Step 6: Submit your online application

- Your application must be receipted by the USCIS within the following timeframe or it will be denied. "Receipted" means that the USCIS must have received the application and issued a "Receipt Note". **Online applications may be receipted 24-48 hours after submission.**
  - o No earlier than 90 days prior to your current post-completion OPT expiring
  - o BEFORE your current post-completion OPT expires
  - o Within 60 days of the issue date of the new STEM recommendation I-20
- Note: **DO NOT include the original I-983 with your application**. You should keep the original I-983 in case you are asked by the U.S. government to submit it in the future
- **Premium Processing**: USCIS offers premium processing of I-765 applications for an additional fee of $1,655. This is OPTIONAL. You may add this to the application at the time of filing or add it after filing. Please let ISS know if you have any questions about adding premium processing to your application.

*The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) ultimately provides the decision on your OPT application. It is your responsibility, as the OPT applicant, to ensure that your OPT application is accurate and complete before you submit it to the US government. Incomplete applications could result in a delay in processing time or denial. Bellevue University in no event shall be held liable for any delay, denial, or mistake on your OPT application.