

UW PARKSIDE **STEM OPT EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION**

As Parkside graduates cannot maintain access to the Canvas-based International Student Manual, please keep this document for your reference.

INFORMATION REGARDING THE STEM OPT WORK PERMISSIONS

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INFORMATION REGARDING THE STEM OPT WORK PERMISSIONS

General Overview

A 24-month extension of Optional Practical Training (OPT) is available for certain F-1 students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math fields of study. This extension is not available to all F-1 students on OPT. While all F-1 non-immigrant students can apply for 12 months of Optional Practical Training (OPT), OPT can only be extended to 36 months for students who have completed a degree in Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics (STEM) and who are employed by companies enrolled in the E-Verify employment verification program.

E-Verify is an internet-based system, operated by the US government to verify the employment status of workers. Currently, it is estimated that only a small percentage of employers are registered in E-Verify. If the employer is not registered in the E-Verify system, the student CANNOT apply for extension of OPT, even if their field of study is on the STEM degree list.

Parkside STEM majors are:

- Applied Molecular Biology
- Biological Sciences
- Chemistry
- Computer & Information Systems
- Computer Science
- Environmental Studies
- Geosciences
- Mathematics
- Molecular Biology & Bioinformatics
- Physics

Students are eligible to utilize a STEM extension for a Bachelor's degree as well as a Master's degree (or for both). STEM OPT can only be used twice.

Under unique circumstances, an F-1 student with a Parkside Masters-level non-STEM degree may be able to use a prior STEM degree from an accredited US school to fulfil the STEM eligibility requirement. To use a prior degree to qualify for the STEM OPT extension, the F-1 student must have graduated from Parkside and have received their prior, qualifying STEM Bachelor-level degree within 10 years of applying for the STEM OPT extension. The qualifying STEM degree needs to be on US <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/stem-list.pdf>. at the time the student submits their application for the STEM extension, rather than at the time that the student received the degree.

Requirements of STEM Employers

STEM OPT Employers are required to be registered with E-Verify.

In addition, they will be required to provide training and mentoring, assist the student in drafting and signing the formal Mentoring and Training Plan (form I-983) and the self-evaluations, be subject to random site visits, and must sign and submit various attestations. This includes attesting that:

- The STEM OPT employment terms and conditions (including pay, hours, duties and benefits) are similar to the terms offered to U.S. workers in similar positions.

- The employer has sufficient resources and training personnel available to provide mentoring and training.
- The employer will not terminate, lay off, or furlough any full-or part-time, temporary or permanent U.S. workers as result of the STEM OPT employment; and the opportunity benefits the students in attaining his/her training objectives.
- The employer must assist the student with completion of the I-983 Training plan for STEM OPT students and sign the student's evaluation on an annual basis.
- The employer is required to remain in good standing with E-verify while employing students on STEM OPT.
- Employers must understand that this rule gives the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) the discretion to conduct site visits with 48-hour notice. If a complaint has been filed or there is evidence of noncompliance with the STEM OPT regulations, DHS may conduct the visit without notice.

OPT STEM Application Process

Eligible students who wish to extend their OPT must submit a STEM extension application within 90 days of completing their authorized work period. The STEM Extension is a similar process to filing the original OPT application including completion of the I-765 Form - <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765Links> to an external site. The application will include:

- The student and employer will need to prepare a STEM training plan (Form I-983) that will address what the student will learn during the employment: <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/i983.pdf> This STEM plan must be developed in conjunction with the employer <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub/for-students/students-and-the-form-i-983>. The employer must be enrolled in E-Verify. The STEM training plan must be completed before an I-20 is prepared requesting STEM approval.
- Please note that International Student Administration fees will continue to be charged by Parkside for university support services during your STEM OPT period. An International STEM Administrative fee of \$200 will be collected by Parkside to cover the two-year (4-semester) STEM OPT period. Pay the Parkside STEM administrative fee with a credit card at: <https://commerce.cashnet.com/UWP> [ISSLinks to an external site.](#)
- To be included with this application are:
 1. **STEM OPT I-20** issued by University's DSO once the International STEM Administrative fee is collected and the STEM training plan is completed. This I-20 must show a STEM OPT request status on Page 2.
 2. Completed form **I-983 Training plan** for STEM OPT students sent to ISS/SA office to upload in SEVIS.
 3. Copy of your **unexpired passport information page**;
 4. Copy of your **F-1 visa information page**;
 5. **Copy of your most recent I-94 printout**,
 6. **Copy of your diploma and transcript showing degree completion** and the **field of study**.

7. **University Accreditation statement** (Obtain from ISS/SA Office – See example at end of this document)
8. **Passport photo.** The photo must meet the following format: color photo with a white background. Photo should be unmounted, printed on thin paper, glossy and unretouched. Your head should be bare unless you are wearing a headdress as required by a religious order to which you belong. The photo should be 2 x 2 inches, with the distance from the top of the head to just below the chin measuring 1 inch to 1 3/8 inches.
9. A copy of your **current Optional Practical Training EAD card** (front and back - and copies of all other EAD cards or denial notices you have been issued).
10. Pay the Parkside STEM Administrative fee of \$200 with a credit card: https://commerce.cashnet.com/UWP_ISSLinks to an external site.

- In addition, the STEM I-983 Training plan (www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/i983.pdf for STEM OPT students must be sent to ISS/SA office to be uploaded into SEVIS.

Hints for competing the I-765 Application

For online STEM OPT application - <https://www.uscis.gov/file-online/forms-available-to-file-online>. Choose **Form I-765.**

Part 2 – #5: If you may move to a new residence while this application is being processed, use a stable address that will be valid for at least 3 months. The United States Postal Service does not forward mail from USCIS.

Part 2 – #13b: Use your U.S. Social Security Number

Part 2 – #21a: This question refers to the 11-digit number on your most recent I-94

Part 2 – #25: USCIS wants to know what your status was the last time you entered the U.S. For most students applying for STEM OPT, it is “F-1 – Student”

Part 2 – #27: **(c)(3)(C)**

Part 2 – #28: Degree = Your degree level and major; Employer’s name as listed in E-Verify; Employer’s E-Verify Identification Number (Can be obtained from your employer).

Working while waiting for STEM approval

A student who has properly filed Form I-765 for STEM OPT extension prior to the expiration of his/her post-completion OPT EAD is allowed to maintain continuous employment for up to 180 days while USCIS processes the extension request. Application can be made 90 days in advance of the expiration of the post completion EAD.

This rule also provides relief for students seeking H-1B specialty worker status and for the employers who wish to hire them. See: <https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/optional-practical-training-extension-for-stem-students-stem-opt>

WHILE ON STEM OPT

The SEVP Portal

The SEVP Portal is an important tool that lets F-1 students on post-completion optional practical training (OPT) meet their legal reporting requirements.

The portal allows these international students the ability to report address, telephone and employer information to SEVP without relying upon their designated school official (DSO) to update their information. To use the SEVP Portal, students must confirm with their DSO that their email address is accurately saved in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

SEVP will email prospective SEVP Portal users important account creation information. However, the only emails the government will send students related to the portal are to create their SEVP Portal account or to reset their password. The sender of the email will be do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov. There is no cost associated with creating an account or accessing the portal.

The portal shares information with SEVIS but does not give students direct access to SEVIS. The SEVP Portal does not eliminate the need for a student to communicate with their DSO.

If you forget your portal password and cannot get into your account, please contact ISS/SA and we can send you a password update link.



SEVP Portal Student
User Guide.pdf

Please consult this STEM governmental resource page for updated information:

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub/for-students/students-stem-opt-reporting-requirements>

Validating SEVIS Information

Every six months a student must work with their DSO to confirm that the student's record in SEVIS accurately reflects their current circumstance.

As part of this six-month reporting, STEM OPT students must confirm that their SEVIS information correctly identifies their:

- Legal name.
- Residential or mailing address.
- Employer name and address.
- Status of current employment.

SEVP Portal users will **receive a reminder** via email 30 days before any validation report is due. Please note that STEM OPT students must report a change in this information, including any loss of employment, within 10 days of the change. In addition, the ISS/SA Office must verify the student record is correct every six months.

Annual Self Evaluation

Within 10 days of completing the first year of STEM OPT, each STEM OPT student must complete and submit to the Parkside ISS/SA Office an annual self-evaluation describing the progress of the training experience. This self-evaluation will be subject to DHS review. See <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub/for-students/students-stem-opt-reporting-requirements>

The DSO must receive the assessment no later than 10 days following the conclusion of the training period. The SEVP Portal users will receive via email in 30 days before their self-evaluation is due

Students and their employers must sign the student's self-evaluation before the student submits it to their DSO, who will include it in the student's record. For more information about the annual self-evaluation, please visit the <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub/for-students/students-and-the-form-i-983>

Note: If a DSO receives an early report of conclusion of employment from a student, the DSO must shorten the employment end date to reflect the last date of the training. Shortening the last date of work is the catalyst for SEVIS counting unemployment; SEVIS will then calculate unemployment correctly.

SEVIS only allows DSO reporting of conclusion of employment from a student during the window for 12- or 24-month reporting. Since unemployment has been accounted for by the entry of the employment end date, the earlier of these two reporting alternatives is sufficient.

Final Self Evaluation

Participants are also required to submit a 24-month (final) self-evaluation within 10 days of the expiration of the STEM OPT period <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub/for-students/students-stem-opt-reporting-requirements> This final assessment must be submitted within 10 days following the conclusion of this training opportunity.

Not submitting a final evaluation would be a violation of the terms of the Form I-983, "Training Plan for STEM OPT Students," and may jeopardize the student's non-immigrant status.

Changing Employers

When a STEM OPT student changes employers, the new employer must be enrolled in E-Verify before the student begins to work for pay. The student must also submit a new Form I-983 to their DSO within 10 days of starting the new practical training opportunity.

When a student changes employers, they must submit their final Form I-983 self-evaluation within 10 days of ending employment with their current employer. In cases where the period of time between employers is longer than 10 days, the student must first report the loss of employment to the DSO and later submit a new Form I-983.

If you were not previously required to pay a UW Parkside STEM Administrative fee, changes in employment may require this fee payment.

Unemployment

DHS has established an aggregate maximum period of allowed unemployment of 90 days for students on 12-month OPT. However, students who receive the 24-month STEM OPT extension can be

unemployed for a total of 150 days. This means that students who obtain a 24-month STEM OPT extension will receive, for a total of 150 days of allowable unemployment, 90 days during the initial period of post-completion OPT plus an additional 60 days during the extension period.

STEM OPT students must report the termination of their practical training experience within 10 days of the event.

If your Job Significantly Changes

Each STEM OPT student must report to their Parkside DSO any material changes to, or material deviations from the I-983 student's formal training plan. A new Training Plan must be submitted to UW Parkside's International Student Services Office within 10 days of any material change.

Material changes or deviations from the original Form I-983 may include, but are not limited to:

- Any change of the employer or employer's EIN number.
- Any reduction in wage compensation that is not tied to a reduction in hours worked.
- Any significant decrease in hours per week that a student engages in a STEM training opportunity. Any decrease in hours below the 20-hour-per-week minimum required.
- Changes to the employer's commitments or student's learning objectives as documented on the Form I-983.

So long as the STEM OPT student and employer meet the regulatory requirements and the modified Form I-983 meets the specified requirements, the student's employment authorization will not cease based on a change to the plan.

STEM OPT students are required to report changes in employer, unemployment and other significant changes to your Designated School Official.

STEM OPT seeking H-1B visa status

The status of F-1 students, as well as their work authorization, is automatically extended if a timely-filed H-1B petition has been granted by, or remains pending with, USCIS. This means that anyone whose OPT expires between April 1 and September 30, whose employer has filed an H-1B application with USCIS, can remain employed as long the petition remains pending (i.e. it is accepted for inclusion in the H1-B lottery) or the petition has been approved for an October 1st start date. However, such students are required to obtain a new I-20 form from UW Parkside's International Student Services Office showing an OPT recommendation that extends the employment beyond the expiration of the EAD card. Students will need to provide UW Parkside's ISS/SA Office with proof of H-1B receipt or approval in order to obtain the new I-20 form.

Attachments: Letter verifying Parkside Accreditation

(Needed for STEM application – see following page)



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June 9, 2023

Dr. Deborah Ford
Chancellor
University of Wisconsin-Parkside
900 Wood Road
Box 2000
Kenosha, WI 53141-2000

Dear Chancellor Ford:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning University of Wisconsin-Parkside (the institution) by the Institutional Actions Council (IAC) of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) at its meeting on June 5, 2023. The date of this action constitutes the effective date of the institution's new status with HLC.

Action. IAC continued the accreditation of University of Wisconsin-Parkside with the next Reaffirmation of Accreditation in 2032-33.

In taking this action, the IAC considered materials from the most recent evaluation and the institutional response (if applicable) to the evaluation findings.

In two weeks, this action will be added to the *Institutional Status and Requirements (ISR) Report*, a resource for the institution to review and manage information regarding its accreditation relationship. Chief Executive Officers and Accreditation Liaison Officers may download the ISR Report in Canopy at <https://canopy.hlcommission.org>.

Within the next 30 days, HLC will also publish information about this action on its website at <https://www.hlcommission.org/Student-Resources/recent-actions>.

If you have any questions about these documents after viewing them, please contact the institution's staff liaison, Jamie Stanesa. Your cooperation in this matter is appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Gellman-Danley".

Barbara Gellman-Danley
President

cc: Suresh Chalasani, Accreditation Liaison Officer
Jamie Stanesa, HLC Staff Liaison