OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING
STEM EXTENSION INSTRUCTIONS & INFORMATION

Students who have received or are pursuing a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree in certain Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics fields may be eligible to apply for a 24-month extension of their original 12-month Optional Practical Training period. Such students must be employed by an employer participating in the E-Verify program (more information can be found on the USCIS website: https://www.uscis.gov click on the link called "For Employers"). The 24-month STEM extension is only available twice in a student's lifetime and must be used to extend a current period of valid OPT.

Students may check their eligibility by asking their international student advisor, or by looking on the web at https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/stemList2022.pdf. The CIP code which determines eligibility is located in the Program of Study section of the I-20. An example of a CIP code is 24.0101 which is the code for Liberal Arts and Studies.

Students will be required to complete Form I-983 with their employer prior to requesting a recommendation for the STEM Extension. This form outlines the student's and the employer's responsibilities with respect to establishing a training plan to be implemented during the 24-month extension period. The student's Designated School Official must review Form I-983 prior to recommending the 24-month extension.

Application timing: Students who have received approval for the initial 12-month period of OPT who wish to apply for an extension may not file their STEM extension application more than 90 days before that period ends, but must request the extension <u>at least</u> 3 weeks before their 12-month OPT period ends to ensure that the application is received in a timely manner.

Continuing employment while waiting for OPT extension: The 24-month extension becomes valid the day after the 12-month period of authorized OPT ends, provided the student applies for the extension in a timely manner. "Timely manner" means that the STEM extension application must be received by USCIS before the 12-month period ends. Students may continue working until approval or denial is received OR up to 180 days. If the extension application is denied, students must stop working immediately. Students are given 60 days from the notice of denial to leave the country or change to a new program of study.

Periods of unemployment: Students who have been approved for 12 months of OPT may not exceed 90 days of unemployment. Students who are unemployed for more than 90 days total during their 12-month period of OPT are no longer considered to be maintaining their immigration status and will have to go home. Should a student be approved for an additional 24 months of OPT, this total period of unemployment is extended by 60 days to 150 days total.

Reporting requirements while on OPT: While on OPT, students are required to continue to report any changes in their home address via the Banweb system. Additionally, students who are approved for the 24-month extension are required to verify their address and their employment information every 6 months. Failure to do so in a timely manner will result in the automatic termination of the student's SEVIS record. <u>There is no way to fix this once it occurs and we have no control over an automatic termination</u>.

Students are also required to complete two self-evaluations with respect to the training plan established when the student completed Form I-983. These self-evaluations must be submitted to the student's Designated School Official at the 12- and 24-month points of the STEM extension. Students must also submit a revised Form I-983 reflecting any material changes to their training plan (e.g., changes in employer or employment location, training goals or job responsibilities, compensation, etc.).

STEM EXTENSION APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Students applying for a STEM Extension have two options for submitting the application:

1. Students may file with the assistance of the Office of International Student & Scholar Services. In this case, students may forward the completed application materials to OISSS for review by sending it to intl-services@pdx.edu (please refer to the checklist included in these instructions). Upon review of the application, an I-20 recommending the STEM Extension will be issued to be submitted to USCIS.

2. A student's employer may file the application on behalf of the student. In this case, students only send pages 3 and 4 of this form and the completed Form I-983 to intl-services@pdx.edu. The I-20 will be prepared and sent to the student so that their employer can submit the STEM Extension application.

The STEM Extension must be recommended in SEVIS **before** the application is submitted to USCIS, and a copy of the I-20 bearing the STEM Extension recommendation must be included with the application and within 60 days of the STEM Extension recommendation.

Additional helpful tips about the required documents:

☐ Form I-983. You may access this form on SEVP's website (https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/form-i-983-overview). This form must be completed and signed by both the student and the student's employer and submitted to the student's Designated School Official **before** the STEM Extension recommendation may be made.

☐ USCIS form I-765 using USCIS Online Application at https://www.uscis.gov/file-online

When you apply for the STEM Extension, you will need to provide additional information about your qualifications for the STEM Extension. These additional pieces of information are:

- Your degree (indicate the level and the CIP Code for your degree (e.g., Master's 38.0101; the CIP Code may be found in the Program of Study section of your current I-20)
- Your employer's name as listed in E-Verify
- Your employer's E-verify company identification number. The E-verify number is a 5- or 6-digit number with no letters or hyphens. This number will be contained in your employer's Memorandum of Understanding with E-Verify.

☐ 1 RECENT (taken within the last 15 days) passport style photo. If you use old photos your application may be returned or you may receive a "request for evidence", which will slow the process of receiving approval.

☐ A photocopy of your diploma with your conferred degree indicated (note that graduate students who are still working to complete their thesis or dissertation are eligible to apply for a STEM Extension prior to completing the thesis or dissertation);

This particular set of regulations is very complex and can be difficult to understand. Please do not hesitate to contact your international student advisor if you have questions about how to proceed such that you can maintain your immigration status, but also derive the maximum benefit from that status!

STUDENT REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES

Students who have been granted a 24-month STEM extension of their OPT period must understand and agree to the following reporting requirements:

- You must report any change in your name or home address within 10 days. You may report these changes by logging into Banweb (banweb.pdx.edu) and updating your records there.

- You must report any change to your personal email address in Worldlink at https://worldlink.intl.pdx.edu/. This will allow us to contact you regarding important reporting requirements and updates during your STEM Extension, as well as to conduct the required verification process every 6 months.

- You must report when you stop working for an employer in Worldlink at https://worldlink.intl.pdx.edu and include the final evaluation form on page 5 of the I-983. This report must be made at the earliest possible opportunity, and no more than 10 days after ceasing employment.

- You must report material changes in your training plan, including changing employers or moving to a different location with the same employer in Worldlink at https://worldlink.intl.pdx.edu. Such changes must be reported at the earliest possible opportunity and no more than 10 days after such a change occurs. When reporting a change of employers and beginning employment within 10 days of ceasing employment with the previous employer, submission of the new Form I-983 is considered to fulfill both reporting obligations. If employment with the new employer begins more than 10 days after ending employment with the previous employer, a separate report of the ending of your employment is required, per the above bullet.

- You must complete two self-evaluations with respect to the training plan established when the student completed Form I-983. These self-evaluations must be submitted to the student's Designated School Official at the 12- and 24-month points of the STEM extension.

You are allowed to be unemployed for only 90 days of your initial 12-month OPT period. IF granted a 24-month extension, this period of time is extended by 60 days to a total of 150 days per 36-month period. If you exceed either period of unemployment, you may be denied future benefits. Days of unemployment are being reviewed by the Department of Homeland Security based on information reported in SEVIS; students exceeding the allowable number of days of unemployment will be found to be in violation of their F-1 status and will have their SEVIS records terminated. Failure to take timely action, in the event that you are nearing your unemployment limit, will result in you having to leave the United States.

Student certification:

This is to certify that I, _____ (*student's name*), have read the above and understand the responsibilities I assume in applying for a 24-month extension of my current OPT period. While it is not a federal regulation, I understand that the Office of International Student and Scholar Services uses e-mail as its primary mode of communication with students, so I will update my primary e-mail address with OISSS as soon as it changes.

_____
Student's signature

_____
Printed name

_____
Telephone Number and E-mail Address

Checklist for STEM Extension application
Please include this checklist with your STEM Extension Application or STEM Extension I-20 Request

Required for STEM Extension Recommendation

☐ I-983. The completed I-983 Training Plan for STEM OPT Students is attached.

☐ A signed copy of the Student Reporting Responsibilities form.

☐ Signed and completed Checklist for STEM Extension application (this form).

Optional documents for OISSS review included

☐ Draft I-765 using USCIS Online Application at https://www.uscis.gov/file-online.
Will the address you gave on this form be valid for at least 5 months? If you think you will move, remember to update your address with USCIS directly to ensure that further correspondence regarding your application is sent to the appropriate address as well as with the US Postal Service and OISSS (through Worldlink). When you apply for the STEM extension, you must fill out Page 3, Part 2, Items 28-28c on Form I-765 (if filing on paper; the online form will automatically include these questions when selecting the STEM Extension as the reason for filing).

☐ Photocopies of: the identity page in your passport, and your arrival record. This might be a copy of your paper I-94 card, your I-797 evidencing a change of status to F-1, or your electronic I-94 record, which can be retrieved at: https://www.cbp.gov/I94.

☐ Copies of any EADs issued for previous periods of OPT, as well as the I-20s issued to recommend those periods of OPT.

☐ 1 RECENT photo.

☐ A photocopy of your diploma with your conferred degree indicated, if applicable.

☐ I request the assistance of the Office of International Student & Scholar Services in reviewing my application before I submit it to USCIS. The application is complete according to the checklist above and I have provided my employment information below.

OR

☐ I will submit my STEM Extension to USCIS on my own, and request that the Office of International Student & Scholar Services prepare my STEM Extension recommendation. I have included the completed Form I-983 and the Student Reporting Responsibilities form and have provided my employment information below.

I understand that a $200 non-refundable extended services fee will be charged to my PSU student account upon STEM OPT recommendation by OISSS.

Student Name: _____ Signature:_____ Date:_____

Job Title:_____