

Responsibilities while Participating in 24-month STEM Extension Optional Practical Training (STEM OPT)

While on OPT you are still considered to be in F-1 student status, therefore Earlham College remains responsible for your SEVIS record. It is important that you uphold the requirements of your F-1 status throughout the period of your OPT. In order to maintain your status, you must do the following:

Reporting Requirements

It is important to understand the reporting requirements while on STEM OPT. The following requirements are *your* responsibility as an F-1 student and failure to comply will result in the termination of your OPT eligibility by USCIS or SEVP.

Address, contact information, name and employment changes:

Report any changes in address, phone number, email address, name or employment (including employer name, employer contact information, and employment start/end dates) within 10 days of changes. You may report this information to an International Student Adviser through the **OPT Update Form*** on the CGCE website or through the SEVP Portal. (Please see SEVP Portal information on page 4 re: exceptions.)

6-month SEVIS Validations:

You are required by USCIS to report your OPT participation to an International Student Adviser every six months. Within 10 days of your scheduled reporting date, you must complete the **OPT Update Form***.

Annual Self-Evaluations:

When authorized under the 24-month STEM Extension rule, you must submit an annual self-evaluation verifying the progress of your training experience. You are required to complete the first "Evaluation of Student Progress" portion of the Form I-983 within 12 months of the listed STEM OPT start date. At the end of the STEM OPT extension, and any time you leave a position, you must submit a second/final assessment. Completed self-evaluations must be signed by your employer and submitted to an International Student Adviser.

Material Changes to an Existing Form I-983:

You are required to report any material changes or deviations from your initial Form I-983 formal training plan to an International Student Adviser by submitting a new, updated Form I-983. Material changes may include, but are not limited to:

- Any change of the employer's EIN.
- Any reduction in your compensation that is not tied to a reduction in hours worked.
- Any significant decrease in the amount of hours/week you're working
- Changes to the employer's commitments or your learning objectives as listed on the I-983

If you do not comply with all regulatory requirements & submit a modified I-983 when necessary, your employment authorization will be jeopardized.

Additional Rules and Responsibilities

Engage in at least 20 hours/week of paid and supervised employment that is directly related to your major area of study and commensurate with your degree level. Employment must be with a company or organization that is registered with E-Verify.

The OPT authorization is approved for specific beginning and end dates. You must not work beyond the authorization period (end date).

If leaving the country, an International Student Adviser must endorse your SEVIS I-20 for travel. **Please note:**

- While on STEM OPT, travel signatures are valid for only **6 months**
- The regulations state that you may re-enter the U.S. to *resume* employment. Therefore, be aware that once your OPT has been approved, there is a risk of being denied entry if you do not have a job or job offer.
- In addition to showing your valid passport, visa and I-20 at the port of entry, you will also need to show your Employment Authorization Document (EAD/OPT card).
- You may not leave the U.S. while your STEM extension application is pending if your OPT has expired. Doing so will be considered an abandonment of your application.

Students granted 24-month Extension OPT are permitted a maximum of **150 days of unemployment** during the total 36 months of OPT work authorization, including the 12 months of post-completion OPT. To maintain status, students with OPT authorization are required to **report any interruptions** in employment to an International Student Adviser within 10 days. Students approaching 150 days of unemployment should prepare to depart the country, apply for a change of status, or prepare to begin a new degree program. Students unemployed for more than 150 days will be considered out of status.

If you decide to discontinue your OPT and leave the U.S. before the End Date on your OPT card, inform an International Student Adviser of your decision and provide the date that you will leave the U.S. The International Student Adviser will “complete” your SEVIS record so that you do not continue to accrue days of unemployment.

Upon completion of OPT you should follow guidelines for the option below that best suits you, being sure to consult an International Student Adviser as necessary.

Option 1- Complete practical training and leave the U.S. within the 60-day grace period. This option requires you to inform an International Student Adviser of your intended departure.

Option 2- Complete practical training and begin another degree program. If you intend to enroll directly into another degree program (within 5 months of your OPT completion date) you will need to work with an International Student Adviser and your new school to coordinate the transfer process in SEVIS.

Please note: Transferring your SEVIS record to a new academic program while on OPT or OPT STEM Extension automatically terminates your work authorization.

Option 3- Continue working in a new visa status. If you have found an employer willing to sponsor you for the appropriate visa, you will need to take the steps to change your status **prior to the expiration** of your OPT.

Alternative Types of Employment Allowed on 24-month Extension OPT

- Multiple employers. A student may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to his or her degree program, all employers must be enrolled in E-Verify and must complete the I-983 form with the student.
- Work for hire. This is also commonly referred to as 1099 employment where an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship. The company for which the student is providing services must be registered with E-Verify. The student must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract period and the name and address of the contracting company.

Not Allowed:

- Self-employed business owner. A student may not serve as his/her own supervisor on the I-983 form.
- Employment placement through an agency or consulting firm.

Your STEM authorization may be cancelled or invalidated if you:

- Start a new degree program
- Transfer to another institution
- Change or end your F-1 status
- Enter the U.S. using any visa other than F-1
- Violate your F-1 non-immigrant status
- Are unemployed for more than 150 days

Automatic OPT Extension during Application Procedure

If your regular post-completion OPT expires *after* your 24-month Extension OPT I-765 is *filed properly and in a timely manner*, your employment authorization is considered automatically extended for up to 180 days while the EAD application is pending.

However, you **should not travel outside of the U.S.** until you receive your new EAD card. Leaving the U.S. while your 24-month Extension OPT application is pending is considered abandoning your application and will result in immediate and irreversible cancellation of your application.

Employer's Responsibility

In addition to the I-983 Form responsibilities, your employer must agree to report to an International Student Adviser at Earlham within 48 hours if you leave your position.

He/she should provide your name, SEVIS ID number (if available), and the date that your employment ended. This information may be submitted by email to internationalstudentadviser@earlham.edu

***OPT Update Form**

You may use this link to inform the International Student Advisers of any updates in your personal or employment information and to report in for each of your 6-month validation reports:

https://earlham.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3pISCmpiZDGffbD

You can also find the OPT Update button on the OPT page of Earlham's website.

SEVP Portal

After your OPT application is approved, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) will send you an invitation to the "SEVP Portal", that will you to edit or add their phone number, mailing address, physical address, and employer information.

However, the Portal does not enable you to make all updates - ***you must contact someone an International Student Adviser to make the following updates:***

- Email address
- Name changes/updates
- STEM Extension employment information and program validations

If you use the Portal to update employment information, you must still contact an International Student Adviser to request an updated I-20.