STEM OPT WORKSHOP

CLARK UNIVERSITY

WHO ARE WE?

- International Students and Scholars Office
  - Part of the International Center at Corner House

- Corner House, 2nd Floor
  - Located to the corner of Charlotte and Woodland Streets
  - 142 Woodland Street (if using GPS)

- [Clark University Campus Map](#)

International Students & Scholars Office Staff

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Today's Agenda

- What is STEM OPT?
  - Who Qualifies
  - What is Different about STEM OPT
- Mentoring and Training Program
- Employer Responsibilities
- Employment Responsibilities
- Required Updates
- Form I-983
- Application Process
- Reminders
- Resources

Who Qualifies

- Students who are currently on Post-Completion OPT and hold a degree in an eligible STEM field
  - https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub/additional-resources/eligible-cip-codes-for-the-stem-opt-extension
- Students may use prior STEM degree if
  - Obtained at a SEVP-certified school in the U.S.
  - Degree was at the bachelor's level or higher
  - Degree was earned less than 10 years from date of application
- Students must be employed by companies enrolled in the DHS E-Verify program

What is different about STEM OPT?

- STEM OPT is a 24-month extension to your existing OPT authorization
- Job requirements are stricter
- Must be full-time paid position at E-Verify enrolled employer
- Cannot be self-employed or start your own business
- Consulting or contracting may be okay – Must have some sort of supervisor-supervisee relationship
- Addition of a mentoring and training program

What is the Mentoring and Training Program?

- Federal regulations require that a formal training plan be created between the student and employer
- The training program must:
  - Clearly lists the student's learning objectives
  - Affirm the employer's commitment to helping the student achieve those objectives

Employer Responsibilities

- Employers must be enrolled in USCIS e-Verify employment eligibility verification program

- Employers must complete and sign I-983 form

- USCIS may visit your employers' worksite(s) to verify whether they are meeting the STEM OPT program requirements

- Employers must report changes in any of the following via I-983 form to the ISSO within 5 business days:

  - Employer name and address

  - Decrease in student's compensation

  - Reduction in hours worked to less than 20 hours per week

  - Employer's EIN

  - Termination of employment

Employment Responsibilities

- You must be working in a paid position for at least 20 hours per week per employer; otherwise, you will accrue unemployment days.

- You cannot be unemployed for more than 150 days total (including unemployment days during your Regular OPT).

- Volunteering and unpaid internships are only allowed above and beyond your paid employment.

- All employment and address information must be current

Required Updates and Reporting for Students

- STEM OPT Employment Update must be submitted:
  - EVERY 6 MONTHS regardless if there is a change or not
    - 6 months: OPT Employment Update online form
    - 12 months: OPT Employment Update online form and 12-month self-evaluation (last page of I-983)
    - 18 months: OPT Employment Update online form
    - 24 months: Final Employment evaluation (last page of I-983)
- Within 5 business days whenever there is a change in employment. NEW I-983 is required.
- SEVP may terminate your record if you do not make this update.

FORM I-983

- Think of the I-983 as your training contract. DSO reviews I-983, not USCIS.

- Form can be signed electronically. See instructions for more information.

- Link to Form

  - https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/i983.pdf

- Link to Guide from USCIS

- https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/i983Instructions.pdf

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

OMB APPROVAL NO. 1653-0054
EXPIRATION DATE: 7/31/2021

TRAINING PLAN FOR STEM OPT STUDENTS
Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) Optional Practical Training (OPT)

SECTION 1: STUDENT INFORMATION (Completed by Student)		
Student Name (Surname/Primary Name, Given Name):		Student Email Address:
Name of School Recommending STEM OPT:	Name of School Where STEM Degree Was Earned:	SEVIS School Code of School Recommending STEM OPT (including 3-digit suffix):
Designated School Official (DSO) Name and Contact Information:		Student SEVIS ID No.: · STEM OPT Requested Period (mm-dd-yyyy): From: To:

Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code: _____

Level/Type of Qualifying Degree: _____

Date Awarded (mm-dd-yyyy): _____

Based on Prior Degree? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Employment Authorization Number: _____

SECTION 2: STUDENT CERTIFICATION

I declare and affirm under penalty of perjury that the statements and information made herein are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. I understand that the law provides severe penalties for knowingly and willfully falsifying or concealing a material fact, or using any false document in the submission of this form.

FORM I-983

- Five Sections
  - Student Information (Completed By Student)
  - Student Certification (Completed By Student)
  - Employer Information (Completed By Employer)
  - Employer Certification (Completed By Employer)
  - Training Plan for STEM OPT Students (Completed By Employer)
    - While your employer fills this out, there should be a conversation between you and your employer to create the plan.
    - The Plan must contain:
      - Student Role
      - Goals and Objectives
      - Employer Oversight
      - Measures and Assessments

FORM I-983

- Self-evaluations – there are two required
- You must complete a self-evaluation of your performance, according to your training plan, within the first 12 months of your STEM OPT.
- It is due no later than 10 days after your first year of STEM OPT ends.
- You must also complete a final self-evaluation at the end of your STEM OPT. It is due no later than 10 days after your second year of STEM OPT ends.
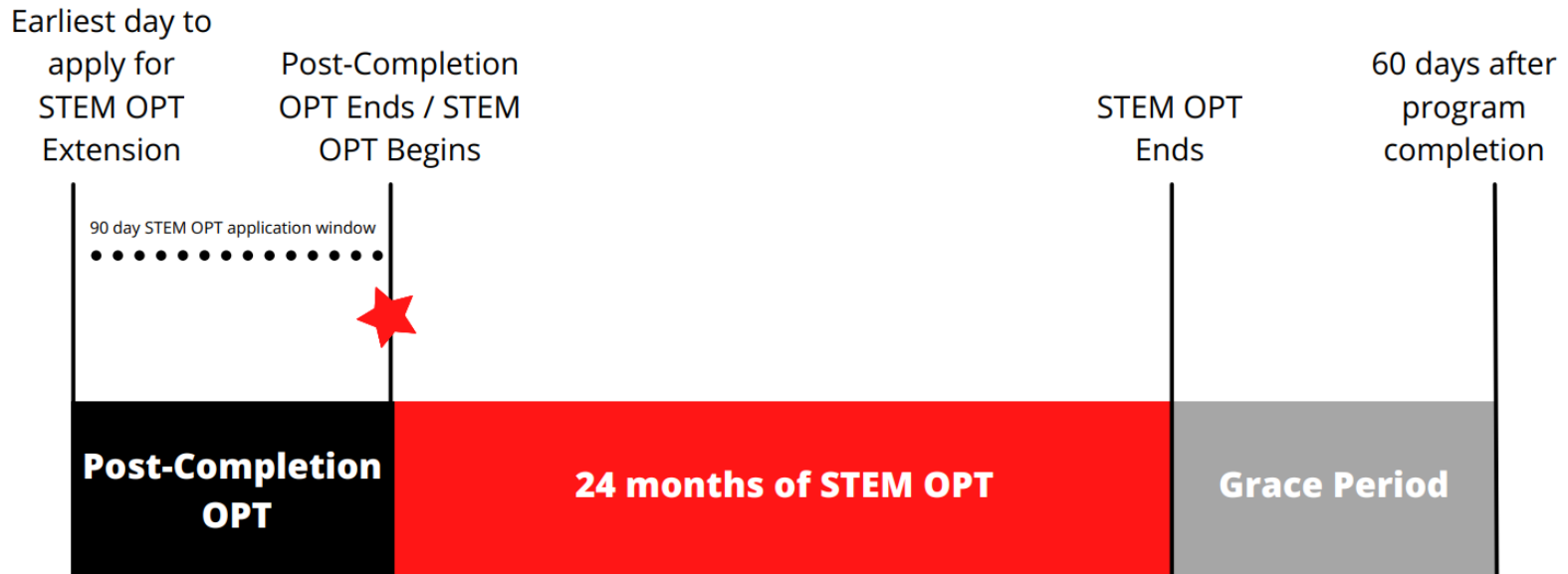
STEM OPT APPLICATION PROCESS

OPT Application Process

- When should I apply?

Post-Completion OPT	**24 months of STEM OPT**	**Grace Period**

Earliest day to apply for STEM OPT Extension

Post-Completion OPT Ends / STEM OPT Begins

STEM OPT Ends

60 days after program completion

90 day STEM OPT application window

⭐ latest day USCIS can receive STEM OPT application (should start at least 30 days prior)

STEM OPT Application Process

- USCIS can receive your application 90 days before the end of your current OPT (EAD card).

- **USCIS MUST receive your application before your current EAD card expires**

- If your application is submitted in time, your transition from Regular OPT to STEM OPT should be seamless.

- You can continue to work up to 180 days while your application is pending. Your employer may want a copy of your receipt notice.

- You should keep your STEM application receipt (I-797) to document that you have submitted it to USCIS

Clark STEM OPT Request
Log into the ISSO Portal

LOGIN

Welcome to Clark University's ISSO Portal!

Please login to access your user profile, update your SEVIS record and request benefits of your immigration status.
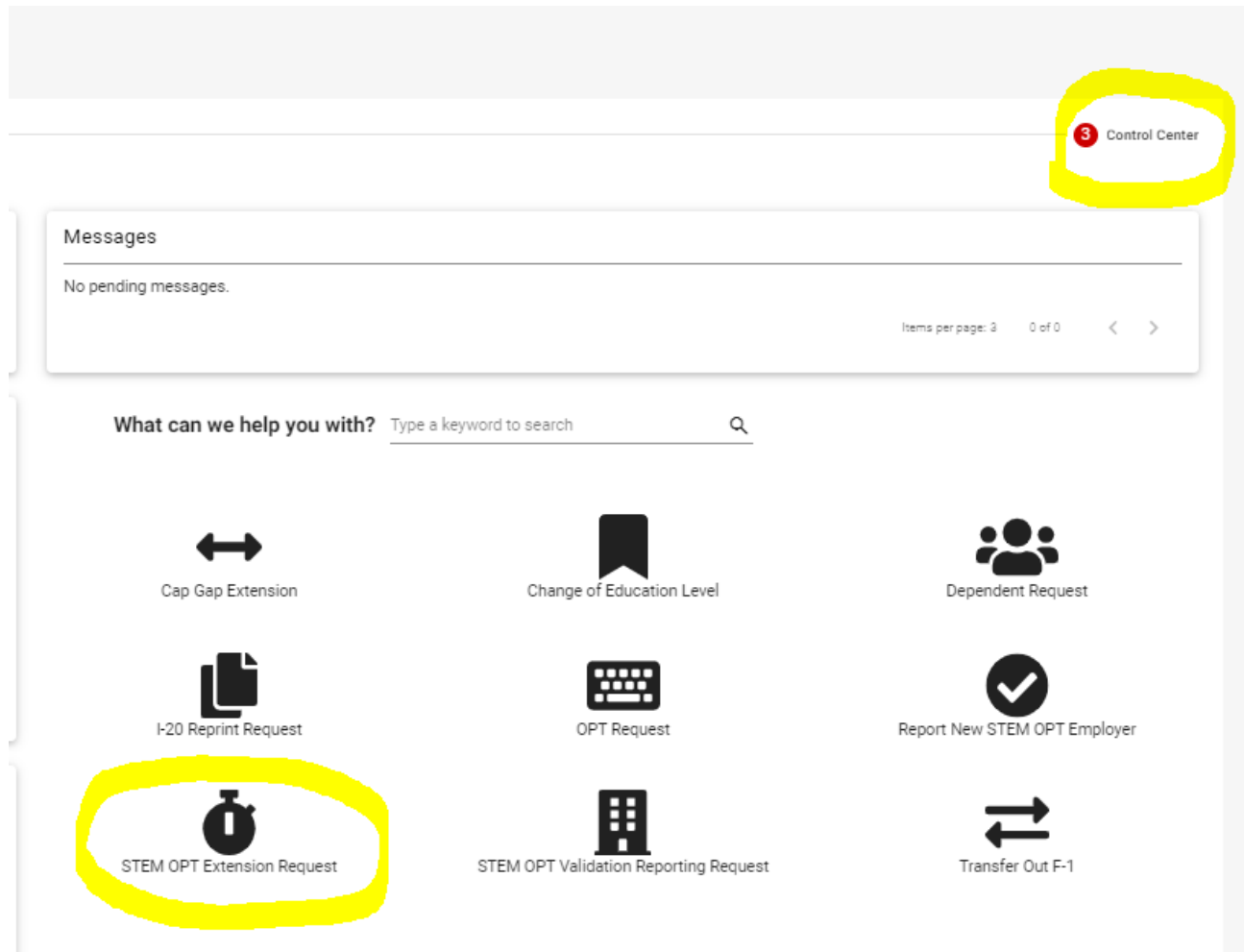
New / Enrolled Students

OPT / STEM / AT Students

Scholars / Departments

Navigate to your Control Center and Click on STEM OPT Extension Request

Once you see the Pop Up, Click on your Degree Level Name and it will take you to the request

STEM OPT Recommended I-20 Issuance

- **It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that immigration documents are correct and contain all necessary information.**

- Be sure to check your immigration document for any possible errors or missing information.
  - CIP Code, Program End Date, STEM OPT Recommendation is present, I-20 is signed, STEM OPT Requested dates are listed, Signature of DSO is present, etc..

- **It is your responsibility to ensure your immigration documents are correct and completed in full prior to submitting your documents to USCIS**

- Please contact our office at isso@clarku.edu if you feel that your immigration documents are incorrect.

STEM OPT Application Process

- Submit your STEM OPT Request through the ISSO Portal
  - *Allow 5 business days from date of submission for the ISSO to process*
- Receive e-signed I-20 with STEM OPT Request through ISSO Portal
  - USCIS must receive your OPT Application within 30 days of issuance of your OPT I-20
- Submit your application with required materials to USCIS either online (you will receive instructions with your new STEM OPT I-20)

Documents to include

- Refer to [USCIS checklist](#) for complete list and most updated information
  - $410 application fee plus [optional $1,500 premium processing fee](#)
  - $200 STEM OPT maintenance fee to Clark University payable on Touchnet
  - Biographical page of your passport
  - F-1 visa
  - I-94
  - Copies of all previous I-20s
  - Passport style photo
  - Copies of previous EAD cards
  - Transcript **and** diploma for STEM degree

STEM OPT Application Process

- What happens after my STEM OPT is approved?
  - You will receive your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) after your application is approved.

STEM OPT Reminders

- You may not accumulate more than 150 days of unemployment (90 days OPT + 60 days STEM OPT)
- The following changes must be reported within 10 business days*:
  - Legal name change (must be reported to the ISSO directly)
  - Residential local/current address change (can update in SEVP Portal
  - Change of employment (must be reported to the ISSO directly)
  - Loss of employment (must be reported to the ISSO directly)
  - I-983 changes or deviations (must be reported to the ISSO directly)

  * link to helpful STEM OPT Reporting Document

SEVP Portal and Information

- https://sevp.ice.gov/opt/
- https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevp-portal-help

SEVP Portal | Student and Exchange Visitor Program Portal

Sign In

Attention: Only students who have OPT approved may use the SEVP Portal. You must create an account and set a password before using this log in page. Go to Portal Help for more information.

Email

Password

Login   Reset Password

STEM OPT Regulations

- What happens when my STEM OPT ends?
  - You have a 60-day grace period at the end of your STEM OPT. During that time you can:
    - Return to your home country
    - Enter a new degree program at Clark
    - Transfer to another US University to start a new degree program
  - You can also change to a new status
    - One common example is when your employer sponsors you for H-1B.

Travel while on STEM OPT

- Travel outside of the US
  - Bring these documents with you:
    - Passport with valid visa
    - Printout of your most recent I-94 information
    - EAD Card
    - I-20 with the OPT recommendation on it
              Travel signature on P. 2 should be new within 6 months
    - Proof of employment
- If you don't have proof of employment, entry back into the US is not guaranteed!
- Talk to an ISSO advisor before traveling!

Resources

- [STEM OPT reporting requirements](#)
- [Study in the States STEM OPT Hub](#)
- [USCIS Form I-765 application page](#)
- [International Center Website](#)
- [ISSO Portal](#)
- [STEM OPT Extension Eligible Majors](#)
- [SEVP Portal](#)

THANK YOU

ISSO Contact Info:
ISSO@clarku.edu
508-739-7362

CLARK UNIVERSITY

CHALLENGE CONVENTION. CHANGE OUR WORLD.