International Student Services
Sierra Vista, 3rd Fl
1500 N Verdugo Rd
Glendale, CA 91208-2894
818-240-1000 x6645
gcciso@glendale.edu

STEM Optional Practical Training: Quick Guide

DISCLAIMER: GCC ISO provides this guide for general information only. Information in this document does not constitute legal advice. Because immigration rules and interpretations can change, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the Department of State (DOS) may modify eligibility requirements or interpretations at any time.

Who is eligible for the STEM extension?

Most GCC students will not qualify for the STEM Extension. To be eligible for this extension, you must:

- Currently be in your post-completion OPT period; *and*
- Have a STEM-eligible bachelor, masters, or doctoral degree from a US school; the CIP code for your degree must be on the SEVP CIP Code list; *and*
- Have had fewer than 90 total days of unemployment while on OPT; *and*
- Be employed full-time by an employer who is registered in the E-Verify employment verification system, *or* have a full-time job offer with an E-Verified employer

You can file for the STEM extension as early as 90 days before the end date of your current OPT authorization (as listed on your EAD). Your application must be received by USCIS by the end date of your current OPT authorization. It must also be received by USCIS no later than 60 days after GCC issues the STEM OPT I-20.

You can also find detailed information on STEM OPT in the STEM Hub. If you believe you qualify for STEM OPT, please contact us at gcciso@glendale.edu to discuss your eligibility and receive the STEM OPT Application Checklist no later than 30 days before your current period of OPT expires.

What is E-Verify?

E-Verify is a system operated by USCIS and the Social Security Administration. It helps employers check if their workers are legally allowed to work in the United States. You can find more information about E-Verify online. You can also check if your company is listed with E-Verify using the E-Verify Employer Check. Instructions on how your employer can enroll in E-Verify can be found on the E-Verify Employers page. It's free to sign up!

What is Form I-983? How do I complete it and where do I send it?

The I-983 training plan describes your learning objectives and confirms the employer's commitment to helping you achieve those objectives. This form must be completed by your employer and you. You must send the completed form to our office before you can apply for STEM OPT.

If your employer has questions about the I-983, please direct them to the I-983 Employers page.

GLENDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES

International Student Services
Sierra Vista, 3rd Fl
1500 N Verdugo Rd
Glendale, CA 91208-2894
818-240-1000 x6645
gcciso@glendale.edu

STEM Optional Practical Training: Quick Guide

How Often Do I Need to Update the I-983?

During your STEM OPT period, you must complete evaluations at certain times. You must complete an in-progress evaluation at 12 months and a final evaluation at 24 months of STEM authorization. You must do these evaluations even if you have not worked for the employer the entire time.

In addition, if you have a "material change" to your job, you must submit an updated I-983. A *material change* refers to major changes like a change in job location, supervisor, company name, or job duties. If your title changes (but your job duties do not) you can report this via email to the international student advisor at GCC. Salary changes alone do not need to be reported.

Lastly, you change employers during the STEM OPT period, you must also take the following steps within **10 days**:

1) Submit the OPT Reporting Form on our Forms page;
2) Complete the I-983 final evaluation with your current employer; and
3) Submit a new I-983 for your new employer.

My OPT expires soon and I am worried I will not get my new EAD card before my current one expires. What can I show my employer to prove I can continue working?

If your post-completion OPT expires while your STEM OPT application is pending, you will receive an automatic work extension of up to 180 days. This extension starts when your current work authorization expires. USCIS will list this extension on your application receipt. You should give a copy of this receipt to your employer. You may wish to direct your Human Resources office to the F-1 OPT STEM Extension section on page 21 of M-274, the Employer Guide to the I-9 if they have additional questions or need further verification of this rule.

How many days of unemployment can I have while on a STEM extension?

You are allowed 60 more days of unemployment, for a **total of 150 unemployment days** during your entire OPT period. This total includes any time you were unemployed during your first year of OPT. For example, if you were unemployed for 30 days during your first year of OPT, you can have up to 120 days of unemployment during your STEM OPT extension period.

How many STEM extensions can I have?

There is a lifetime limit of two periods of STEM OPT. Each STEM OPT period must be after you earn a higher degree level. You cannot go backward. For example, if you are using a bachelor's degree to apply for your first STEM OPT period after earning your associates degree, you cannot earn another bachelor's degree later and use STEM OPT at that level again. The next time you can use STEM OPT is at the master's degree level.