Students: STEM OPT Reporting Requirements

In order to maintain their legal F-1 status, a STEM OPT student must regularly check in with their DSO throughout the duration of the extension to validate Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) information and report changes made to the student’s training plan.

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.

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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.

Please note that STEM OPT students must report a change in this information, including any loss of employment, within 10 days of the change.

Annual Self-Evaluations

Each STEM OPT student must submit to their DSO an annual self-evaluation about the progress of the training experience.

Students and their employers must sign the student’s self-evaluation before the student submits it to the DSO, who will include it in the student’s record. For more information about the annual self-evaluation, please visit the Students and the Form I-983 page.

Material Changes to an Existing Form I-983

Each STEM OPT student must report to their DSO any material changes to, or material deviations from, the student’s formal training plan.

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

- Any change of the employer’s EIN.
• Any reduction in student 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.
• 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.

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 begins a new practical training opportunity with a new employer less than 10 days after leaving the student’s prior employer, the student may fulfill all reporting obligations (loss of employment and new training plan) by submitting a new Form I-983.

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.

Unemployment

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

Students who are granted a 24-month STEM OPT extension are allowed an additional 60 days of unemployment beyond the initial post-completion OPT limit. 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.

Employer Noncompliance

If a STEM OPT student believes that their STEM OPT employer is not complying with the terms and conditions of the 24-month STEM OPT extension regulations, the Form I-983 instructions, and the completed Form I-983 on file with their DSO, the student may:

• Contact the Student and Exchange Visitor Program at the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) by following the instructions found on ICE.gov.
• Report violations through this Homeland Security Investigations tip submission form.

There are a number of enforcement and oversight mechanisms to help ensure compliance, including reporting requirements, employer site visits, periodic evaluation of a student’s training and required notification of any material changes to or deviations from the Training Plan.
Please note that if a student believes that their employer is not complying with the 24-month STEM OPT extension regulations and Form I-983 instructions, the student should leave that practical training opportunity and report their unemployment to the DSO. A period of student unemployment, caused by an employer’s failure to comply with program requirements, on its own will not affect the STEM OPT student’s status so long as the student reports changes in employment status and adheres to the overall unemployment limits.