STEM OPT Employer Reporting Requirements

For employees holding the F-1 Student Status granted the STEM OPT Extension benefit

You have hired a student who currently holds an F-1 student status and has been granted the 24-month extension of Optional Practical Training (OPT) for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields by U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services, an agency of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Employers play a key role in maintaining and strengthening the integrity of the F-1 STEM OPT extension program (STEM OPT).

Compliance with the program’s various reporting requirements rests predominately with the students and their sponsoring schools. However, STEM OPT employers must assist in tracking the STEM OPT students and their practical training progress. This document outlines four types of reporting that employers of STEM OPT hires must fulfill.

1) Complete and Certify the Form I-983 Training Plan

The STEM OPT employer must work with the student to complete the Form I-983 training plan document and designate an Official with Signatory Authority to certify that information in the document is true and correct. The form is not complete until the employer has signed and certified it in the designated areas. For more information about the I-983, see: https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/form-i-983-overview.

Specifically, STEM OPT employers are responsible for completing Section 3 to Section 6 on the Form I-983. These sections request specific information about the company, the agreed-upon practical training schedule and compensation, as well as the formal training plan, respectively. For more information about how to properly complete the form, visit Employers and the Form I-983.

The Official with Signatory Authority must be familiar with the STEM OPT student’s goals and performance and must have the authority to affirm that the statements provided on the Form I-983 are true and correct.

2) Material Changes to an Existing Form I-983 Training Plan

Employers must work with the STEM OPT student to report to ISSS any material changes to, or material deviations from, the student’s formal training plan, by completing and signing a new Form I-983.

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

- Any change of Employer Identification Number (EIN) resulting from a corporate restructuring;
- 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; and
- 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.
3) **Evaluation of Student Progress**

The STEM OPT employer must review the student’s annual self-evaluation of progress, and sign it to attest to its accuracy. The student must submit assessments to the International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) office at Middlebury College/The Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey.

Two assessments must be submitted:
(1) an annual evaluation must be submitted within 12 months of the STEM OPT start date, and
(2) a final assessment that recaps the training and knowledge acquired during the complete training period at the conclusion of the program.

- The evaluation must have an applicable date range associated with it, so the relevant period of evaluation is clear.
- The student must submit the 12-month and final evaluations *no later than 10 days* following the conclusion of the applicable reporting period.
- The employer’s *Official with Signature Authority* must sign and date the printed form to confirm the assessment information that the student entered.
- Once signed, the employer must return the evaluation to the student, who will provide it to ISSS for recordkeeping.

4) **Loss of Employment**

Both the employer and student must notify ISSS when the F-1 student’s employment is terminated for any reason before the end of the authorized extension period. The employer must report such a change in employment to ISSS *no later than 5 business days* after the student’s employment terminates or the student has departed.

Employers and the STEM OPT students can satisfy this reporting requirement, by notifying ISSS (via an email to [iss@middlebury.edu](mailto:iss@middlebury.edu)) indicating:
- that the employee was terminated or has otherwise departed,
- the applicable date of such termination or departure, and
- the employee’s full name, date of birth, and SEVIS ID number, if known.

An employer shall consider a STEM OPT employee’s departure date as either:
- The date the employer knows the student has left the practical training opportunity, OR
- The date after five consecutive business days have elapsed and the student has not reported for practical training (without the employer’s consent), whichever date is earlier.

*Any questions?*  
Contact International Student & Scholar Services at [iss@middlebury.edu](mailto:iss@middlebury.edu) or call 802-443-5858.