

Tips for Employers to Complete Form I-983 for the F-1 OPT STEM Extension

One important requirement for the OPT STEM extension is the completion of a Training Plan using Form I-983. This plan should show that the student will receive specific training over the next 24 months to accomplish set objectives. The form should be completed along with the student's application to extend OPT and obtain work authorization.

Additionally, the OPT STEM employer must have an Employer Identification Number (EIN) and be enrolled in and using the E-Verify program at the STEM OPT worksite. The training opportunity must be directly related to the student's qualifying STEM degree.

To complete the training portion of Form I-983 (section 5), consider that the training plan:

- Must be individualized to show how the training will enhance the student's STEM knowledge.
- Is not a job description (i.e., not what the employee will do for the company). Think about what the company will do for the trainee.
- Should reflect the student's learning objectives and the employer's resources to provide the training.
- Can be derived from existing training.

Below are suggestions for answering key questions on the Form I-983, using a STEM transportation engineer student as an example.

Student Role: Describe the student's role with the employer and how that role is directly related to enhancing the student's knowledge obtained through his or her qualifying STEM degree.

In this section, it is helpful to break the student's training into 3- to 4-month phases and outline specific roles and objectives for each phase. The roles should include verbs, such as assisting, observing, learning, participating, coordinating, or reviewing.

For example, the transportation engineering student's training could involve three phases:

- Phase One: Highway Design
- Phase Two: Bridge Design
- Phase Three: Construction

Here is an example of a possible description for phase one:

“The student will assist his supervisor to analyze and develop plans, design calculations and cost estimations, and make recommendations to improve highway design and safety. Throughout this phase, the student will apply and expand his knowledge about Florida's transportation system, highway safety, traffic theory, and intelligent transportation.”

*This material is not intended to substitute as legal advice.

Goals and Objectives: Describe how the assignment(s) with the employer will help the student achieve his or her specific objectives for work-based learning related to his or her STEM degree. The description must both specify the student’s goals regarding specific knowledge, skills, or techniques as well as the means by which they will be achieved.

For this question, you should explain how the training will facilitate the student’s learning and the specific methods of learning, such as training seminars, on-the-job training, observation methods, research, and meetings with clients, governmental agencies, and staff.

For example:

“Goal 1: The student will understand and apply Florida’s rules for highway design and management. This will be accomplished by guided research and on-the-job training.

Goal 2: The student will understand and apply transportation engineering rules to plan and design programs to improve road safety. This will be accomplished by attending training seminars, observation methods, guided research, and hands-on training.”

Employer Oversight: Explain how the employer provides oversight and supervision of individuals filling positions such as that being filled by the named F-1 student.

For this example, you could explain how the student will receive on-site supervision, discussion, and feedback from the supervisor and monthly meetings with experienced experts in the field.

Measures and Assessments: Explain how the employer measures and confirms whether individuals filling positions such as that being filled by the named F-1 student are acquiring new knowledge and skills.

Here you could explain that the student will have specific tests to assess the knowledge gained; assessment meetings with their supervisor; and written evaluations of performance after assignments of the training program.

The Designated School Advisor (DSA) at each school is a tremendous resource in this process and in an appropriate position to review and provide additional feedback on the particular training plan.

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