



Dear Employer,

Congratulations! Hiring a University of Chicago international student is an excellent way to bring some of the world's best talent to your organization. The many benefits of hiring international students include:

- Broadening the diversity of ideas and perspectives of your teams through enhanced cultural understanding in a global market;
- Enhancing your economic, scientific and technological competitiveness through increased diversity in research, innovation and knowledge;
- Increasing understanding and knowledge of markets in STEM OPT students' home countries and utilizing networks of such employees for the benefit of your organization.

As the office that works with international students at the University of Chicago (Office of International Affairs, or OIA), we have some important information to share:

International students in F-1 status are eligible for a work benefit in the U.S. called Optional Practical Training, or "OPT". OPT grants F-1 students 12 months of employment in the U.S. in jobs that are related to their fields of study. Students who have earned U.S. degrees in STEM fields are eligible for an additional 24 months of OPT. The 24-month STEM OPT extension allows students to enhance their academic experience through on-the-job training.

Employers play a key role in maintaining and strengthening the integrity of the STEM OPT extension program. Although the program's various reporting requirements predominately apply to students and sponsoring schools, there are instances where STEM OPT employers must assist in tracking STEM OPT students and their practical training progress. The employer's responsibilities for a student's STEM OPT include:

- E-Verify:** The STEM OPT employer must be enrolled in the E-Verify program.
- Compensation:** The STEM OPT student's compensation must be commensurate with the pay of a U.S. citizen with the same credentials in a similar position.
- I-983 Training Plan:** The student's direct supervisor must review and sign-off on the student's I-983 training plan.
- Changes to I-983 Training Plan:** The direct supervisor must review and sign-off on a new I-983 training plan if there are any material changes to the student's job (e.g. supervisor name, compensation).
- Student Self-Evaluations:** The student is required to do two self-evaluations to monitor progress and report on educational goals; one at the mid-point of employment and one at the end. The



student's direct supervisor must review and sign-off on these self-evaluations, as needed.

- Loss or Termination of Employment:** The employer must notify OIA when the student's employment is terminated for any reason before the end of the authorized OPT extension period. This report must occur within five business days of the end of employment and can be sent via email to international-affairs@uchicago.edu.
- DHS Site Visits:** STEM OPT regulations authorize the Dept. of Homeland Security (DHS) to visit employers who have hired STEM OPT students to confirm that the student is adhering to the training plan on record. In most cases, DHS will provide notice to the employer at least 48 hours in advance of any site visit. For more information please see <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/employer-site-visits>.
- Student Responsibility:** Employers are expected to review and sign-off on training plans and evaluations in a timely manner, but it is the student's responsibility to keep such documentation up to date and request review of the I-983, if needed.

To find more information about the employer responsibilities listed above, please visit the Study in the States website of the Dept. of Homeland Security at <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/employers-stem-opt-reporting-requirements>.

The Office of International Affairs is here to assist with any questions you may have. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns about the requirements listed above.

With best regards,

Tamara Felden, PhD
Director, Office of International Affairs, and
Assoc. Dean of Students in the University