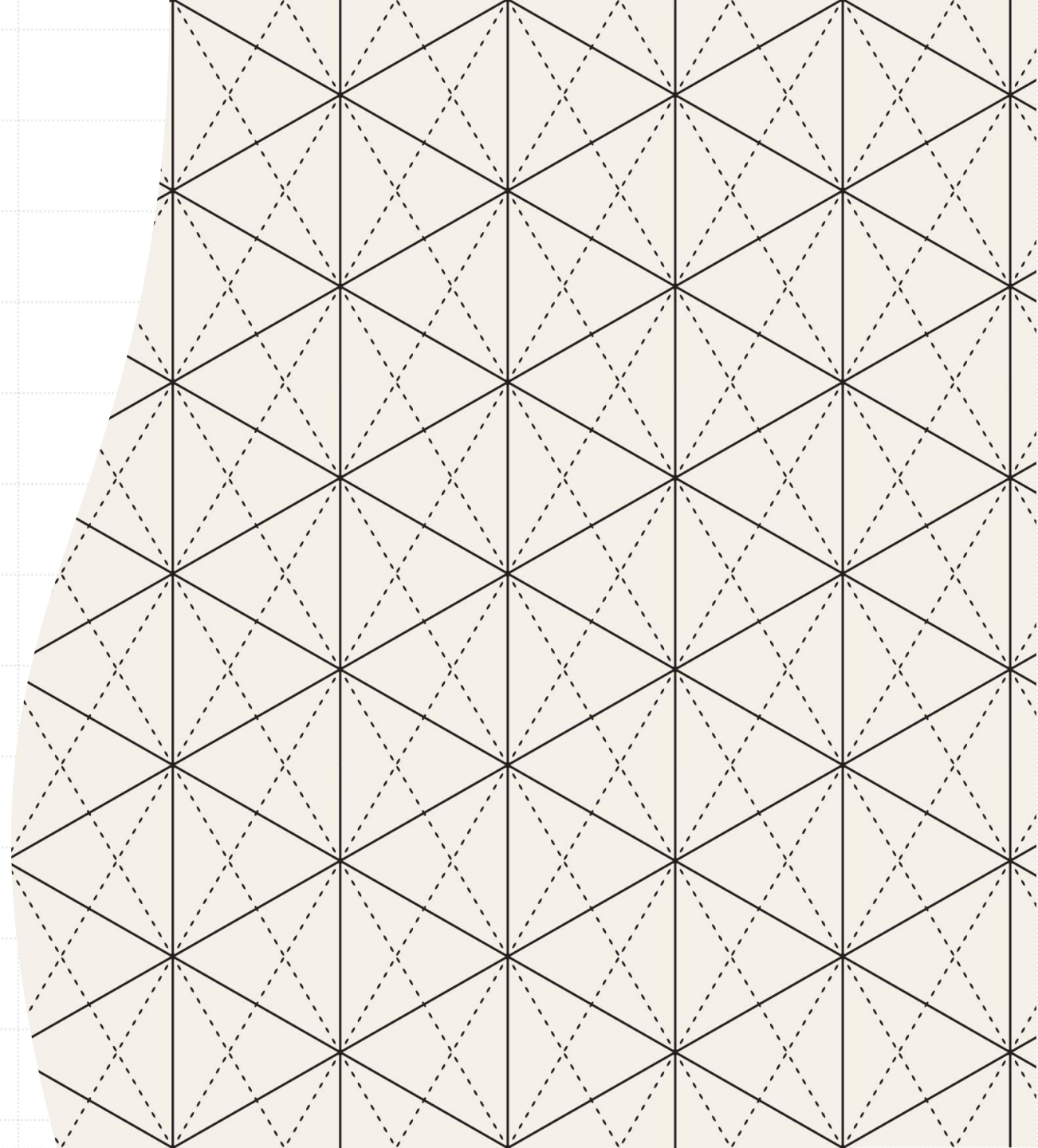# STEM OPT Extension

Definition and Eligibility

- STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math)

- If your major is on [this list](), you're eligible for extension of your current OPT for up to 24 months
  - Check your I-20 for the CIP code of your major

- STEM Extension does not come automatically—you must apply and get approved before your 12-month OPT ends

- You must have not accrued more than 90 days of unemployment

- Make sure your employment information is reported to the OIE and is up to date

Two Options for STEM Extension

Option 1: Current Degree (Most common)

- Use the current STEM-eligible degree upon which your 12-month OPT is based
- The job for extension must be related to this degree

Option 2: Prior Degree

- If your current OPT is not based on a non-STEM degree but you have a different degree that is STEM, you're eligible for extension
- The previous degree must be at a lower degree level, and is earned within the past 10 years from a SEVP certified school

Employment Requirement

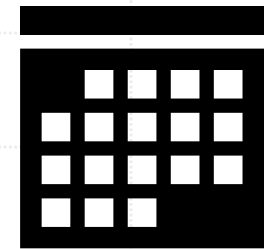| Employer must be e-verified	Clear training plan must be created	The employee-employer relationship must be Bonafide	Working hours must be at least 20 hours/week	There must be compensation
· https://www.e-verify.gov/	· Work with your employer to fill out I0983 · Instructions available in the Document Review Request portal	· Employer that pays you and you work for must be who completes your training plan · Self-employment is not eligible	· 20 hours/week is considered full-time by USCIS	· Standard payroll · Housing · Stipend

Timelines and Dates

- USCIS can accept your STEM OPT Extension application **as early as 90 days before the 12-month OPT end date listed on your EAD**

- USCIS must receive your STEM OPT Extension application **before the 12-month OPT end date listed on your EAD**
  - **OIE must review your documents and create an I-20 for your application, so do not wait until the last minute!**
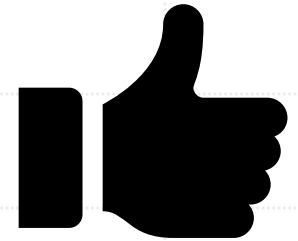
Application Process

1. **Student completes the STEM OPT Document Review Request from the OIE website**
   - OIE will check your documents and help you perfect them
   - Usually takes about 2-3 corrections. Follow instructions carefully!
   - Takes up to 10 business days to review
   - Email caustin4@emporia.edu when you submitted the request

2. **OIE will make a recommendation for your STEM OPT Extension in SEVIS and issue an OPT I-20**

3. **Student will submit the STEM OPT Extension application on the USCIS's website on their own**
   - Instructions will be provided with the I-20
   - Do not submit the application before receiving the OPT I-20
   - May ask Chie to review your online application before submitting—give her several options of your availability when asked

4. **Wait for approval**
   - It takes 90 days or sometimes even longer
   - If you move before you receive a new EAD card, you must report your new address to USCIS

180-Day Rule

- You can continue to work while your STEM OPT application is pending for up to 180 days, as long as you filed on time (before your 12-month OPT end date)
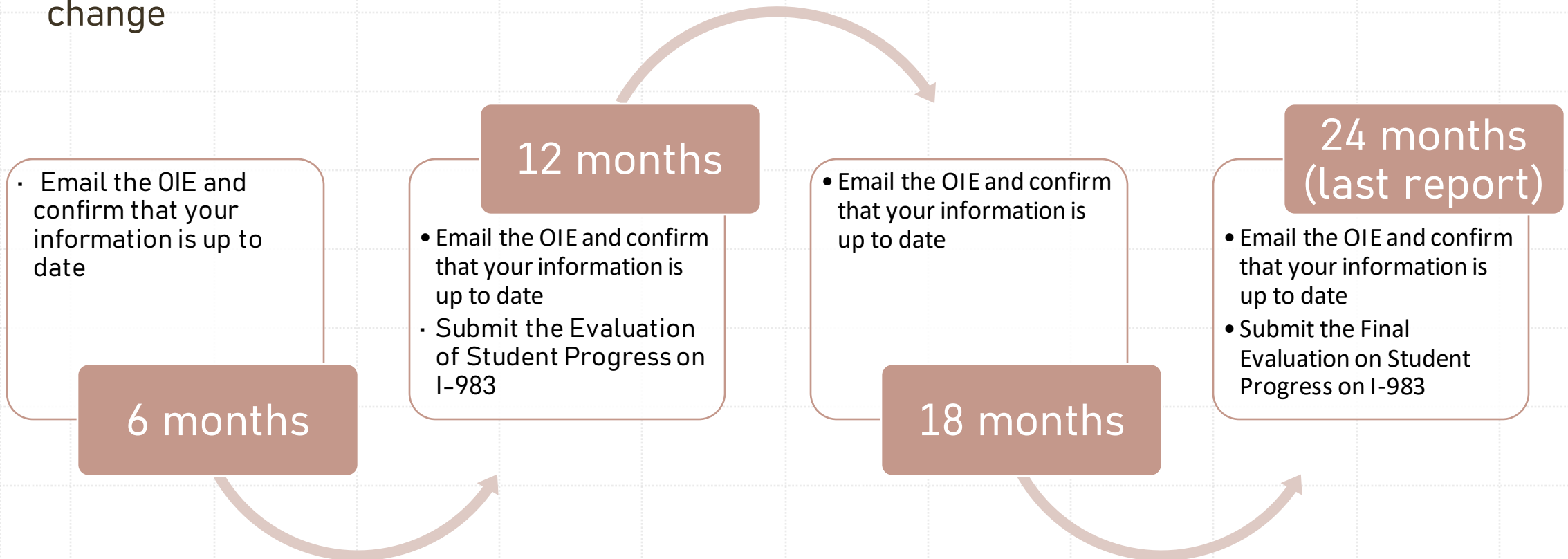
Mandated Employment Reporting

- While on STEM OPT Extension, there are several mandatory reporting requirements

- The SEVP portal will still be open to you, but use it only to report your new address

- Any employment updates should be emailed to the OIE

- Failure to report our employment could cause serious consequences, including losing your visa status

Mandated Employment Reporting Cont.

- You're required to report your employment status to the OIE every 6 months of any change

6 months
- Email the OIE and confirm that your information is up to date

12 months
- Email the OIE and confirm that your information is up to date
- Submit the Evaluation of Student Progress on I-983

18 months
- Email the OIE and confirm that your information is up to date

24 months (last report)
- Email the OIE and confirm that your information is up to date
- Submit the Final Evaluation on Student Progress on I-983

Changes in Employment

End of a job or change to new visa

- Fill out the Self-evaluation of your performance on I-983
- Get a signature of your employer

Start of a new job

- Requires a new I-983
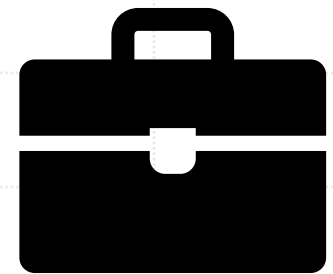
Leave a job and add a job at the same time

- Must submit the Final Evaluation for the previous I-983
- Submit a new I-983 for the new job

Material changes to I-983

- Submit updated I-983 if there are changes on:
- Salary, EIN, Employer address, Hours worked per week, etc.

Unemployment

- You are given 60 days of unemployment for STEM OPT Extension

- This can be combined with your remainder of your 90-day unemployment from your 12-month OPT

  - For example, if you didn't use any of the unemployment days for your 12-month OPT, then you will have 150 days of unemployment allowed on STEM OPT
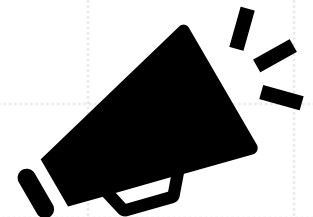
International Travel

- You must have the following items for reentering the U.S.

- Most updated I-20 with a travel signature
  - Must have accurate information
  - Request a travel signature here. The process could take up to 3 business days!

- Passport
  - Must be valid more than 6 months into the future

- Proof of employment, such as a paystub

- STEM OPT EAD

Remember

- Submit the Application Document Review in a timely manner so that you won't miss the USCIS's deadline for the STEM OPT Extension

- Email is the preferred method of communication with the OIE

- OIE will not remind you of dates and deadlines
  - It is your responsibility to count unemployment dates, manage deadlines for the application and mandatory employment reports

Questions?

- Email oisa@emporia.edu AND caustin4@emporia.edu

- It takes us up to 5 business days to reply to your email, depending on how busy we are.

  - Please don't worry or send us another email if you don't get a response right away!