

An Overview of STEM OPT Employer Site Visits

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Employers who have employed F-1 students in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) category of the Optional Practical Training (OPT) program can [expect site visits by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program \(SEVP\)](#). The March 2016 STEM OPT rule allows the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to conduct site visits of employers that train STEM OPT students.

Conducting Site Visits

The site visits are aimed to ensure that STEM OPT students are in compliance with the OPT program rules. Employers must engage the students in a structured, work-based learning experience consistent with the practical training and other information provided in Form I-983 – Training Plan for STEM OPT students. Employers will receive prior notification of such visit and the DHS will then assess if the program mentoring is working for both the student and employer.

The DHS is looking to verify if the employer has enough supervisory personnel to effectively maintain the program. The DHS might first request information through phone or email and conduct a site visit right after giving notice or do so later. The DHS may ask employers to provide evidence that they use to assess the wages of similarly situated U.S. workers. The DHS will maintain all the information that is obtained during a site visit.

Consequences of Site Visits

The DHS's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) will be overseeing employer location site visits. The DHS may refer matters to the U.S. Department of Labor or any other appropriate federal agency if the site visit warrants such referral.

If the DHS determines that an employee or student needs to update or clarify any information, the DHS will send a request in writing to the employer on how they should provide that necessary information.

Preparation for Students and School Officials

Students and Designated School Officials (DSO) must be prepared in anticipation of these upcoming

site visits. Students must update their information in the SEVP portal or report updates to their school officials to make sure that their employer information and home addresses are up-to-date. Students must also be careful to update the address and name of the employer's location where they are working. DSOs should also be prepared to provide the student's up-to-date Form I-983 if requested.

Preparation for Employers

Now will be a good time for the employers to ensure that Form I-983 is updated and to ensure that the student's training complies with the training plan. Also, to designate a company representative and train them on how to handle any such site visits by ICE. Employers must also maintain audit files containing all relevant STEM OPT form copies and supporting documents.

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