I am a PDSO at a large, public research institution. I have been in the field for over 30 years. Normally we have about 2000 international students. We currently have 115 students on the STEM OPT extension.

I just have a few suggestions for items I see our students regularly having trouble filling out properly.

Section 1
SEVIS School Code of School Recommending STEM OPT (including 3-digit suffix)
Direct students where to find the school code by adding: "*located on I-20 under School Information*".

Designated School Official (DSO) Name and Contact Info
Please slightly enlarge this space. It is challenging to get all our contact info in the space provided.

Qualifying Major and Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) Code
Separate major and CIP code into two fields. If there is only one space for information it is common for people to think only one piece of info is being requested and only provide half of the info desired.

Section 5
This is the section students and employers have the most difficult time filling out. I don't think the descriptions are clear enough about what is being sought.

Student Role
I suggest adding the word "assignments" or "responsibilities" to provide more clarity.
For our instructions, we have added "*Describe in DETAIL what assignments the student will carry out during training AND how these related to the student's STEM degree*."
Another suggestion for a simple solution would be to add "responsibilities" to the current wording:
Describe the student's role ==*and responsibilities*== *with the employer and how the role* ==*and responsibilities are*== *directly related to enhancing the student's knowledge obtained through his or her qualifying STEM degree.*

Goals and Objectives
It is clear most people do not understand what a goal or objective is and how they need to be specific and measurable. I suggest clarifying what goals and objectives are. We give students this additional recommendation on how to complete this section:

Example Format (summarize each goal in one sentence)
Goal 1: (list specific knowledge, skills or techniques to be learned)
- *How and when this will be achieved (provide a timeline)*
Goal 2: (list specific knowledge, skills or techniques to be learned)
- *How and when this will be achieved (provide a timeline)*
Goal 3: (list specific knowledge, skills or techniques to be learned)
- *How and when this will be achieved (provide a timeline)*

These goals should be specific tasks that you hope to complete. They should be measurable because your self-evaluations will reflect how successfully you have completed these goals. Think of them in terms of S.M.A.R.T. (often defined as Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound) goals.

Employer Oversight
Maybe the reference to a training plan in both Employer Oversight and Measures and Assessments blurs confusion over what is being requested in these two fields. In our instructions for this field, we have added "*Explain in detail how student will be supervised and what oversight the employer will provide*."

Measures and Assessments
Most employers have an established system/process for evaluating employees so I recommend including the word evaluate or evaluation to clarify. In our instructions, we have added "*Explain in detail how the employer will evaluate the student and confirm the student is gaining new knowledge and skills."*

Evaluations
In general, I feel like students struggle to know how to fill this out. Often the student fills out both sections at the same time. Sometimes it says the same thing twice. Often the dates don't correspond to the correct period at all**.**

Evaluation on Student Progress
I suggest calling this the "First" Evaluation or "Initial" Evaluation to clarify. Also when it states "*Address whether there are any modifications*…." expand and say "*for the next evaluation period."*

Final Evaluation on Student Progress
Perhaps consider changing this to "Second" Evaluation" or emphasize it is the final one. Add the word "final" or "second" to the description as well. "Provide a *final* self-evaluation of your performance…." Delete "Address whether there **are** any modifications" or perhaps change it to past tense "Address whether there **were** any modifications."

Overall, the training plan seems to be working. I think there is just slight room for improvement. Keep in mind most students to not read the instructions, they just look at the form which is why I'm making suggestions to the form itself.

Thank you,

Lynne Vanahill