

PROCESS FOR 24-MONTH STEM OPT EXTENSION FOR F-1 STUDENTS

The STEM OPT extension is a 24-month period of temporary training that directly relates to an F-1 student's [program of study](#) in an approved STEM field.

Eligible F-1 students with STEM degrees who finish their program of study and participate in an initial period of regular [post-completion OPT](#) (often for 12 months) have the option to apply for a STEM OPT extension. Students may not apply for STEM OPT extensions during the 60-day grace period following an initial period of regular post-completion OPT. (Source: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-extension-overview>.)

Eligibility for the STEM OPT Extension

To qualify for the 24-month extension, you must:

- Be in valid F-1 Status.
- Have been granted Post-Completion OPT and is currently be in an approved period (working) of OPT.
- Have earned a bachelor's degree or a higher degree in an eligible STEM field from a school that is accredited by a U.S. Department of Education-recognized accrediting agency and is certified by [the Student and Exchange Visitor Program \(SEVP\)](#) at the time you submit your STEM OPT extension application.
- Have a paid job offer. (Employment currently related to the STEM major.)
- An employer that is enrolled in USCIS E-Verify program.
- Employer agree to provide formal training and learning objectives that must be directly related to the major under the qualifying STEM degree. (See your current I-20 Form for the Classification of Instructional Code, (CIP).
- Within 90 days of your current OPT End Date (see the EAD card).

Under certain circumstances, an F-1 student may use a prior STEM degree earned in the U.S. from a currently accredited SEVP-certified school. To use a prior STEM degree, the F-1 students must:

- Have received their most recent degree (which does not need to be STEM-related) from a currently accredited Student and [Exchange Visitor](#) Program (SEVP)-certified school.
- Have received their prior, qualifying STEM degree within 10 years of applying of applying for the STEM OPT extension with USCIS.
- The qualifying STEM degree must be on the Department of Homeland Security's [STEM Designated Degree Program List](#) at the time students submit their applications for the STEM OPT extension, rather than at the time that students received their degrees.

Employment Requirements while on 24-Month STEM Extension

The student must work do the following:

1. Work for at least 20 hours per week for an E-Verify employer.
2. Follow all the employment requirements under the STEM extension.
3. Not engage in volunteer or unpaid work. (This differs from the 12-Month OPT.)
4. Must not be self-employed.

Applying for a STEM OPT Extension

Students should allow 10 business days for ISSO to process their requested I-20 Form. A DSO will review your application and issue two (2) new, updated I-20 with a STEM OPT Extension recommendation printed on the back page. (Keep one of the I-20 Forms for yourself and include the other with your application). Allow yourself ample time to work on your application to be submitted to USCIS. The following are some tips.

Tips:

1. To apply for a STEM OPT extension, you must use the required [Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization](#).
2. Submit your application and supporting documents up to 90 days before your current (12-Month) OPT EAD employment authorization expires, and within 60 days of the date your designated school official (DSO) enters the recommendation for OPT into your Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) record.
3. Submit the correct application filing fee (<https://www.uscis.gov/forms/our-fees>).
4. Know what the Employer's name is as listed in E-Verify & the employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number, or valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number
5. Obtain Form I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status, endorsed by your DSO within the last 60 days.
6. Obtain a copy of your STEM degree certificate (diploma).

Other Tips:

1. Check the [SEVP Portal](#) to see if your 12-Month OPT information -- current address, employment information are up-to-dated and correct.
2. If your current address and employment information is **not** correct, submit an ***OPT Reporting Form*** to the ISSO at Haverford College. The *OPT Reporting Form* can be found on the ISSO's website at <https://www.haverford.edu/sites/default/files/OPT-Reporting-Form.pdf>. The information that you submitted on your *OPT Reporting Form* will be used to update your SEVIS record BEFORE the DSO print the STEM OPT I-20 request.
3. **Complete and submit your STEM OPT Extension I-20 Request to ISSO.**
4. Complete [I-983 Training Plan](#). (For assistance in Completing the Form I-983 Training Plan go to the ISSO's webpage – **Living and Working in the U.S.** under “TRAINING PLAN FOR STEM OPT STUDENTS.”)
5. After receiving the new I-20 Forms do the following:
 - Check to ensure that the I-20 is endorsed by the DSO at the bottom of pg. 1.
 - Sign your name on the new I-20 at the bottom of pg. 1.
 - Be sure that your application packet arrives at USCIS within 60 days of issuance of the I-20 by the DSO; see the date on the document.
 - Include your employer's name as listed in E-Verify also the E-Verify Company Identification Number, or valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number on the Form I-765.
 - Obtain a copy of your transcript from the Registrar's Office.
 - Print a copy of Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Number, which can be accessed at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>).
 - Print a copy of the front and back of your current EAD card, Form I-766.

- Get two (2) U.S. passport-size photographs. See the guidelines at [USCIS photo instructions](#). Lightly print in pencil your name and I-94 Admission # on the back of each photograph.
- Secure the proper filing fee, which can be in the form of a money order, personal check, cashier's check, or credit card. If you will be using a credit card, be sure to include [Form G-1450, Authorization for Credit Card Transactions](#). If are paying by check, make the check payable to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security; do not use abbreviation. For example, do not write "USDHS."
- Complete and submit the [G-1145 Form](#), only if you would like to receive an email, or text from USCIS notifying you of the arrival of your STEM OPT application.
- Do not send I-983 Training Plan to USCIS UNLESS the adjudicator request a copy at the time your application is being processed. The original I-983 Training Plan should be sent to the ISSO with your request for the new Form I-20.
- Keep a copy of their STEM OPT application and other documents for their personal records.
- Although USCIS's I-765 Filing Instructions for the STEM OPT does not require copies of previous I-20s, ISSO recommends sending those document(s) with your application so that all your information is at hand.

MAILING

For the appropriate mailing address where to send your STEM OPT application, see USCIS's website at: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses#Lockbox%20Addresses> for the instructions.

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