



*This document is meant to serve as an overview and outline the steps for the STEM OPT Extension application process.*

*Please refer to the [Study in the States STEM OPT Hub](#) for complete information.*

## Eligibility

- ⇒ F-1 students approved for standard Post-Completion Optional Practical Training based on a STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) field that appears on the [DHS STEM-Designated Degree Program List](#) can apply to USCIS for a 24-month extension of post-completion OPT (for a total eligibility of up to 36 months.)
- ⇒ The student must have a job or job offer from an employer registered in the [E-Verify system](#).
- ⇒ A student whose period of standard post-completion OPT has already expired is ineligible to apply for the STEM OPT extension.
- ⇒ A minor field of study cannot serve as the basis for a 24-month STEM OPT extension.
- ⇒ An individual is eligible for two 24-month STEM OPT extensions, each after a higher level degree has been obtained.

## When to apply

The student must apply for the STEM OPT extension before their standard period of post-completion OPT expires, but no earlier than 90 days before the end date on the EAD.

## While application is pending:

- ◆ If a student's regular post-completion OPT expires after a STEM OPT [I-765](#) is properly and timely filed, the student's employment authorization is considered automatically extended for up to 180 days while the STEM OPT application is pending.
- ◆ Travel is not recommended for students who are in a 180-day period of interim employment while the STEM OPT extension is pending.

## Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and dates:

- ◆ The employment authorization period for the 24-month OPT extension begins the day after the expiration of the initial post-completion OPT employment authorization and ends 24 months thereafter, regardless of the date the actual extension is approved.
- ◆ USCIS will issue a new EAD reflecting STEM OPT extension dates.

# STEPS TO APPLY

## 24-Month STEM OPT Extension



### STEP ONE: Contact LETU Office of Global Initiatives

1. Student submits the following to the DSO:
  - Completed and signed [Request for 24-Month STEM Extension](#)
  - Completed and signed [Form I-983 Training Plan](#) (completed by student and employer)
2. DSO reviews the Form I-983 and determines that it is complete, signed, and addresses all program requirements
3. DSO updates the student's SEVIS record and issues a new Form I-20 with a recommendation for the 24-month STEM OPT extension
4. DSO mails the STEM OPT I-20 to the address provided on the STEM Extension Request Form
5. Student signs STEM OPT I-20 upon receipt

### STEP TWO: Gather OPT STEM Extension application documents

- [Form I-765](#)
  - ⇒ Item #3: If you might move, use an address that will not change (such as employer, or LETU Office of Global Initiatives.) Mail from USCIS is not forwarded by the Postal Service.
  - ⇒ Item #16: Eligibility code for the 17-month STEM OPT extension is (c)(3)(C)
  - ⇒ Make sure you sign the Form I-765
- Personal check or money order for \$410 (fee is subject to change) payable to "Department of Homeland Security" with I-94 number written on the check / credit card if paying online
- Two identical passport photos with name and I-94 number written on back in pencil or felt pen / digital photo if submitting online
- Copy/scan of [I-94](#)
- Copy/scan of signed STEM OPT I-20 from OGI
- Copy/scan of STEM degree (transcript)
- Copy/scan of EAD card (front and back)
- Letter from employer that includes job duties and specifies full-time employment
- Copy/scan of passport picture page
- Copy/scan of visa
- [Form G-1145](#) to request e-notification when USCIS receives your application (recommended if mailing application)

### STEP THREE: Submit application & supporting documents to USCIS

- Make a copy of the entire application (for your records) before you submit it to USCIS
- Documents must be mailed/submitted within 60 days of the DSO's recommendation in SEVIS and before the expiration of the current post-completion OPT
- Submit the application to [USCIS Lockbox](#) with jurisdiction over the address you list on the I-765 form

#### **Reporting Requirements:**

Throughout the STEM OPT extension period, the student, employer/s, and school must comply with all reporting, training, supervision, evaluation, wage, documentation, and other obligations specified in the regulations and on Form I-983. Please refer to [STEM OPT Reporting Requirements](#).