OVERVIEW of STEM OPT Extension*

- A 24-month period of temporary training that relates directly to an F-1 student's program of study in an approved STEM field
- F-1 students who finish their program of study & participate in an initial period of regular post-completion OPT can apply for a STEM OPT extension.
- Students may NOT apply during the 60-day grace period following the end of an initial OPT.
- For an outline of the process, review the STEM OPT Reporting Requirements (one-pager) which identifies the reporting requirements for students, employers, and DSOs.

Eligibility for OPT STEM Extension:

- Have been granted OPT & are currently in a valid period of post-completion OPT
- Have a degree in an eligible STEM field
- Must pursue extension through a DHS STEM Designated Degree Program List employer enrolled in USCIS's E-Verify
    - Student must have a valid job before applying for STEM OPT extension
    - Students approved for STEM OPT will be granted an additional 60 days of unemployment in addition to the original 90 days received at the start of post-completion OPT
- Employer must provide student with formal training and learning objectives
- Student must work a minimum of 20 hours per week per employer
- Employment must be directly related to your STEM major field of study

Applying:

1. Students must submit a completed & signed Form I-983 Training Plan for STEM OPT Students to the DSO before the DSO can recommend the extension in SEVIS & issue you the required new I-20.
    - The student and prospective employer must work together to complete the Form I-983 using the Form I-983 Instructions. Employers are required to complete Section 3 through Section 6 on the Form I-983.
    - Go to Employers and the Form I-983 for details regarding employer completion of the Form I-983 & additional reporting responsibilities.
    - Students must submit a new Form I-983 for every new employment or training experience they accept during their STEM OPT extension.
    - Student must provide DSO with a separate, short paragraph explaining how employment directly connects to his/her STEM major.
    - Student must provide EVerify # of employer.

2. Properly file:

- Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, up to 90 days before your current OPT employment authorization expires, and within 60 days of the date your DSO enters the recommendation into your SEVIS record (issues new I-20).

Include with the Form I-765:

* The correct application fee
* Your employer's name as listed in E-Verify, and
* Your employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number

- Form I-20 (with STEM recommendation from your DSO) Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status, endorsed by your DSO within the last 60 days (you must submit your I-765 no later than 60 days after your new I-20 was issued); and
- A copy of your STEM degree.

*** If you file your extension application on time & USCIS receives it before your OPT end date, and your OPT period expires while your extension application is pending, your employment authorization will be automatically extended for 180 days. This automatic 180-day extension ceases once USCIS adjudicates your extension application.

Paper Format (only as information; do NOT submit a paper application):

1. Form I-765
2. Instructions for Form I-765

File Online (RECOMMENDED):

1. Sign in or create an account

For help answering the questions on Form I-765 for STEM OPT, see **Suggestions for Online Filing of Form I-765 for STEM OPT Extension**.

For information regarding student reporting requirements for STEM OPT, go here.

After Approval

* Email DSO a copy of your new EAD card
* Any new job offer letter
* DSO will issue you a new I-20 with the STEM OPT approval notation

For more STEM OPT information, see: STEM OPT Frequently Asked Questions

*Information taken from Study in the States