



## OPT STEM Extension

### Eligibility Requirements

- ✓ CIP code of degree's major field of study (listed on your I-20) must appear on the [DHS STEM Designated Degree Program List](#)
- ✓ Have been granted OPT and currently be in valid period of OPT, working for a US employer in a paid job (for at least 20 hours per week) directly related to your field of study
- ✓ Have earned a bachelors, masters or doctoral degree from a school that is accredited by a US Department of Education recognized accrediting agency and is certified by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) when you submit your STEM OPT extension app.
- ✓ Currently employed (cannot be self-employed) or have a job offer from an employer registered with the E-Verify employment verification system: <https://www.uscis.gov/e-verify>
- ✓ The working relationship between student and employer must be a *bona fide employer-employee relationship*. Certain types of arrangements including multiple employer arrangements, sole proprietorships, employment through "temp" agencies, employment through consulting firm arrangements that provide labor for hire, and other relationships will not qualify. *Students cannot qualify for STEM OPT extensions unless they will be bona fide employees of the employer signing Form I-983 Training Plan and the employer that signs the Training Plan must be the same entity that employs the student and provides the practical training experience.* Read the information provided [here](#) and on the [USCIS STEM OPT web page](#)
- ✓ Apply and application must be received and receipted by USCIS prior to the end date of your OPT. You may submit the application up to 90 days before your current OPT employment authorization expires
- ✓ *Previously obtained STEM degrees (within 10 years):* If you are an F-1 student participating in a 12 month period of post completion OPT based on a non-STEM degree, you may be eligible to use a prior STEM degree earned from a US institution of higher education to apply for a STEM OPT extension. You must have received both degrees from currently accredited and SEVP- certified institutions, and cannot have already received a STEM OPT extension based on a prior degree. The opportunity also must be directly related to the previously obtained STEM degree
- ✓ *STEM degrees you obtain in the future:* If you enroll in a new academic program in the future and earn another qualifying STEM degree at a higher educational level, you may be eligible for one additional 24 month STEM ext.

### How do I request the new I-20 from the ISSC in order to apply for the STEM extension?

1. Complete/gather the following:
  - a) [Form I-765](#) (type into PDF, see I-765 instructions for help)
  - b) [Form I-983](#) (type into PDF, see I-983 instructions for help)
  - c) Copy of unofficial transcript for STEM eligible degree (must indicate your conferral date)
2. Click [HERE](#) to complete the ISSC's STEM Extension I-20 Request eForm. Log in with your UMassD email and password. You will be prompted to upload the 3 documents listed above into the eForm.
3. The ISSC will print your new I-20 indicating the STEM extension request and email you for your mailing/pick up method
4. You are responsible for mailing all materials listed below in the Application Checklist to USCIS

### STEM Extension Application Checklist

**Do not mail the I-983 to USCIS. It is required in your electronic file at the ISSC only.**

- [Form I-765](#) (use [Instructions for Form I-765](#) to verify all application details listed below)
  - a) Application fee - Check or money order for \$410 payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Write your I-94 number on bottom left of check and your name on top left.
  - b) U.S. Mailing Address – Enter your US address that will remain valid in a several months
  - c) Use code **(c) (3) (c)** indicating that you are filing for the STEM extension
- Copy of SEVIS I-20 with OPT extension request: This will be created after the ISSC receives and processes your STEM extension I-20 request. You will sign and keep the original I-20. The copy of the I-20 must be sent with the application to USCIS.
- Proof of STEM eligible degree: Unofficial transcript for STEM eligible degree (must include your conferral date)

- Two (2) US passport-style photos. Photo size and other details can be found in the [I-765 instructions](#). Photographs must not have been taken more than 30 days prior to the submission of your application and not previously used.
- Copy of all prior SEVIS I-20s
- Copy of biographical page of current passport
- Copy of most current visa and I-94
- Copy of current EAD card
- Form [G-1145](#) E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance: Complete if you want to receive an e-mail and/or a text message that your Form I-765 has reached the USCIS Lockbox facility. Clip to the first page of your application.
- Mail all materials listed above to USCIS according to <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>

### **AFTER the Application is Filed**

If you file a timely application (before the end date on the original OPT EAD card) for the extension, you will remain in status and may continue employment even after the end date of the original OPT EAD card while the extension application is pending until the I-765 is processed or 180 days, whichever comes first. Once you have the Notice of Receipt from USCIS and EAD card for the extension, an electronic copy must be emailed to [intl\\_office@umassd.edu](mailto:intl_office@umassd.edu)

You are allowed no more than an aggregate of 150 days of unemployment during 36 months of combined standard (12 months) and extended (24 months) of OPT.

### **Student Reporting Requirements on STEM OPT – What do I need to report? When? How?**

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students-stem-opt-reporting-requirements>

<https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/students-and-employment/stem-opt>

During the 24-month STEM OPT extension, you **must report to the ISSC within 10 days of any change** in the following:

- Legal name
- Residential or mailing address
- Employer name
- Employer address
- Loss of employment
- [“Material” changes to Form I-983](#)

Report a **change from one employer to another** here: [STEM Extension Employer Update eForm](#)

**Every 6 months**, you are required to submit a validation report to your DSO during your STEM extension to *confirm your name, address, employer name and address, and/or loss of employment* are accurate. The report is due within 10 business days of each reporting deadline (6 months, 12 months and 18 months).

**At 12 months and 24 months**, you must complete a **self-evaluation** (last page of [Form I-983](#)): the first one is due at 12 months and the final evaluation is due at the end of your 24 month STEM OPT period. Evaluations must be signed by you and your immediate supervisor, then submitted to the DSO.

Please use the [STEM Extension Reporting eForm](#) to submit the following reporting requirements. Validation reports and self-evaluations are due within 10 days of your exact reporting deadline.

- 6 months after STEM OPT start date on EAD – validation report due
- 12 months after STEM OPT start date on EAD – validation report AND self-evaluation due
- 18 months after STEM OPT start date on EAD – validation report due
- 24 months after STEM OPT start date on EAD – final self-evaluation due

**This information sheet was developed from the following materials:**

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub>

<https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/students-and-employment/stem-opt>

NAFSA Advisor’s Manual