

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)

Note: A new provision in the STEM OPT rule allows DHS to perform site visits to employer locations that train STEM OPT students. Please provide this [Employer Site Visits](#) information to your employer.

2. 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 email your new I-20 indicating the STEM extension request
4. You are responsible for applying to USCIS for your STEM OPT extension.

STEM Extension Application Checklist

You may choose how to apply to USCIS for STEM OPT using their *online application or paper/mail-based application*.

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.
- 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.
- Any prior SEVIS I-20s with CPT/OPT authorizations
- 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

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.

STEM OPT Reporting Requirements

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

Every 6 months a student on STEM OPT must work with their DSO (submit STEM reporting eForm) to confirm/submit:

- Legal name
- Residential or mailing address
- Employer name and address
- Status of current employment
- 12 and 24-month self -evaluations (last page, bottom half only of Form I-983)

Please report to your DSO (within 10 days of the update):

- Material Changes to an Existing I-983
- Change of Employer (submit STEM employer update eForm)
- Unemployment
- Employer Noncompliance