STEM OPT Extension Tutorial

OIA
Office of International Affairs
Welcome to the STEM Optional Practical Training Tutorial for DSU F-1 international students! This tutorial is a comprehensive guide to STEM OPT extensions at Delaware State University, we hope you find it helpful. Please contact OIA should you have any questions.

The topics covered include:

• **Overview** – what is the STEM OPT Extension?
• **Eligibility Requirements**
• **Application Process**
• **Application Timeline**
• **Required Documentation**
• **Sample STEM OPT I-20 Authorization**
• **Mailing Instructions**
• **USCIS Processing Timeline**
• **Travel During STEM OPT**
• **Cap Gap and STEM OPT Extensions**
• **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**
What is STEM OPT Extension?

The STEM OPT Extension gives F-1 students currently on valid post-completion OPT the option to extend their authorization for an additional 24 months of practical training.

Important Factors to Consider:

- You can work anywhere in the U.S. related to your STEM field, as long as your employer is enrolled in E-Verify.
- Since you will continue to stay in F-1 status during STEM OPT, you must report to OIA.
- The STEM OPT extension can only be applied twice in your lifetime – not for each degree level.

8 CFR 214.2 (f)(10)(ii)©

24-month extension of post-completion OPT for science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) degree. [...] An extension will be for 24 months for the first qualifying degree for which the student has completed all course requirements [...] if a student completes all such course requirements for another qualifying degree at a higher degree level than the first, the student may apply for a second 24-month extension of OPT while in a valid period of post-completion OPT authorized [...] In no event may a student be authorized for more than two lifetime STEM OPT extensions.
Eligibility Requirements

1. Must be in valid F-1 status & currently authorized for OPT.
2. Must have completed a degree in a DHS approved STEM field (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math)
   

3. Must be working for an E-Verify employer (or have an offer of employment from an E-Verify employer) in your major area of study.
4. Must be within 90 days prior to current OPT end date.
Eligible Fields of Study and E-Verify

- **STEM eligible fields** can be verified by your CIP Code on [https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov.eligible-cip-codes-for-the-stem-opt-extension](https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov.eligible-cip-codes-for-the-stem-opt-extension). This is listed on the 1st page of your I-20 with your major information, as a 6 digit numerical code "xx.xxxx."

- You **must have** a job offer with an employer enrolled in E-Verify to apply. It is best to check with your employer's HR department to obtain their E-Verify information.

- Your employer **must** provide a formal training plan articulating your learning objectives during the STEM extension on the Training Plan Form I-983.
  - If you change employers or information within the form I-983 changes, you must submit an updated copy to cmoore@desu.edu within 10 days of the change.

- You **must** submit your current OPT employment to update your SEVIS record before we can process your request.
Dates of STEM OPT Extension

STEM OPT begins on the date after the expiration of standard OPT. For example:

Standard OPT:

01/05/2019 – 01/04/2020

STEM Extension:

01/05/2020 – 01/04/2022
Important Factors to Consider:

1. Apply early. USCIS can take 90 days or more to process STEM OPT applications.

2. USCIS must receive your STEM OPT Extension application before the end date of your current EAD.

3. You may continue your E-Verify employer while your STEM OPT application is pending with USCIS for up to 180 days. 8CFR213.2(f)(11)(I)© and 8CFR274a.12(b)(6)(iv)
What is Form I-983:

Form I-983 “Training Plan for STEM OPT Extension period and not your original/current OPT employment. It is a training plan outline for the two years of STEM OPT, created by you and your E-Verify employer. It is submitted to OIA for review of your eligibility to receive the STEM OPT I-20 and it will not be mailed to USCIS as part of the STEM OPT application.

Most Common Mistakes on Form I-983

Section 1: Student Information (Completed by Student)

1) Ensure all application pages reflect your name in this order: [SURNAME , GIVEN NAME]
2) Start date of STEM OPT period is the day after OPT expires (see slide #6)
3) End date of STEM OPT period is two years later and one day less (ex: 7/15/2019 - 7/14/2021)
4) Qualifying major and CIP code (ex: computer science, 11.0101)
5) Based on prior degree? (if using same degree that OPT was granted for, then "no")

Section 3: employer information (Completed by Employer)

Start Date of Employment – Date when you begin the STEM OPT training with employer (Earliest date is the start of the STEM OPT extension, even if you are continuing employee).

Final Section: Evaluation on Students Progress (last page) - Leave this page blank; evaluations will be due after completing 1 year on STEM OPT and at the end of employment.
Please collect the following documents:

• G-1145 (this will allow you to receive on electronic confirmation when USCIS has received your application)

• Check made out to U.S. Department of Homeland Security for $410.00 (make sure to put your I-94 number in the memo section)

• Cover letter

• 2 U.S. Passport style photos, taken within 30 days, with your name and I-94 number written on the back in pencil

• Copies of your passport, F-1 visa, I-94, and current (and any previous) EAD(s) (front and back)

• Documentation regarding your previous SEVIS ID Number (if any) and/or previous CPT/OPT authorization(s) (if any)

• Official DSU Transcript

• Photocopy of diploma
Please mail your application with the following documents to the appropriate USCIS Service Center, Based on the Mailing address on your I-765. To find out which address to use, visit http://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses#lockboxaddresses.

Include the following when mailing your STEM OPT application to USCIS in the order listed (make sure to make a copy of documents for yourself):

- *(Recommended)* G-1145 E-notification
- $410 check or money order addressed to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security" OR Form G-1450 authorizing a credit card payment
- *(Recommended)* Cover Letter
- 2 Passport-style photos taken within 30 days
- Completed and signed I-765 Application Form
- I-20s reflecting STEM OPT Extension Recommendation (be sure to sign in blue ink) (You will keep a copy of the I-20, a copy is filed in our office)
- SEVIS employment history printout (OIA will provide this together with your new I-20)
- Photocopies of passport, F-1 visa (ok if visa is expired), I-94 printout
- Photocopy of front and back of current (and any previous) EAD(s)
- Explanation and documentation of any previous SEVIS ID(s) and CPT/OPT authorizations, if applicable
- Official DSU transcript
- Photocopy of Diploma
- Additional supplemental documents as stated in your cover letter, if applicable

**USCIS must receive your STEM OPT Extension application before your OPT end date.**
Cover Letter (Recommended, NOT required)

Today’s Date

USCIS
PO BOX 660867
Dallas, TX  75266

To Whom It May Concern:

Please consider my request. I (state your name) request STEM OPT employment beginning May 13, 2019 to May 11, 2021.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if further assistance is required. Enclosed is a complete application for STEM Optional Practical Training, Including:

- Completed Form I-765
- Required Fee $410.00
- Two ADIT photos
- Form I-20 with DSO recommendation for OPT
- Photocopies of: Form I-94, Passport, Previous I-20(s), Visa, Transcript, College Diploma

Sincerely,

Your Name
(email)

Enclosures
QUESTIONS, CONCERNS, CONTACT:
OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
1200 N. DUPONT HIGHWAY
GROSSLEY HALL – ROOM 115
DOVER, DE 19901
302-857-6474
FAX 302-857-6567
cmoore@desu.edu