



24-Month STEM OPT Extension Guide

This Packet covers essential information about how to apply for the 24-Month STEM OPT-extension. The Packet has information regarding:

- **Eligibility**
- **Application requirements**
- **Reporting responsibility**
- **Unemployment during OPT**
- **Documents and Assembly**

Am I Eligible?

To be eligible you must:

- **Be a current F-1 student and currently be in a valid period of OPT**
- **Have earned a STEM Degree (Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctoral) from a certified institution during the application of the OPT STEM extension.**
 - STEM Degrees previously earned from a certified institution: while engaged in a 12-month non-STEM degree based OPT period a previously earned STEM degree maybe used to get an extension.
 - STEM Degrees earned in the future from a certified institution: a 12-month OPT STEM extension maybe pursued.
- **Have submitted the form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization before the expiration of the OPT employment authorization.**
- **Have filled a completed I-983 with all other supplementary documents and attestations.**
- **Be working in a paid position for participating E-Verified employer.**

How do I Apply for the STEM Extension?

To apply you must file and submit the following documents:

- **Form I-765 alongside the application fee before the deadline**
- **Form I-20 and Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Status – endorsed by your DSO**

- A copy of your STEM Degree

Note: If you file your extension application on time and your OPT period expires while your extension application is pending, USCIS will extend your employment authorization for 180 days.

What do I do after I receive my OPT extension?

You are responsible for reporting changes to your DSO to maintain legal f-1 status

- If you made any changes with regards to the items listed below, report them to your DSO **within 10 days of the change.**
 - You legal name
 - Mailing/residential address
 - Email address
 - Employer’s name
 - Employer’s address
- Regularly meet with your DSO at least every 6 months to confirm if there have been any or no changes to the information listed above.

What if I don’t find a job during the OPT period?

Unemployment during OPT is allowed for a limited amount of days by the law. Taken from the USCIS website:

If you received...	You may be unemployed for...	For a total of ... (during the OPT period)
Initial post-completion OPT only	Up to 90 days	90 days
17-month extension	An additional 30 days	120 days*
24-month extension	An additional 60 days	150 days*

*If you are granted an additional 7-month extension in addition to your 17-month STEM-OPT (for a total of 24-month STEM OPT extension) then you may be unemployed for a total of 150-days during the OPT period.

What documents do I need?

The following is a list of what documents you need to assemble for the mailing packet. Read the instructions carefully consult the USCIS website if you have any more questions

Step 1: Read all information necessary to know about OPT and the Extension. Consult your DSO if you have any questions or concerns.

Step 2: Obtain a recommendation and a new I-20 from the Office of International Student Services (OISS)

Complete the STEM Extension Request e-form on **iStart** and submit all the necessary e-forms in that e-form group (including a copy of your EAD card and a completed and signed I-983, no more than 90 days prior to the end of your initial OPT period. PLEASE TYPE YOUR I-983. You, not your employer or company attorney, must submit this e-form. Carefully follow the instructions on the e-form to avoid processing delays. Upon receiving your complete request, your STEM I-20 will be issued in 5 business days and you will receive an email from OIE.

Step 3: Accomplish Form I-983 “Mentoring and Training Plan” with your employer.

There is a video tutorial available at studyinthestates.dhs.gov

- Make sure to answer all questions clearly and completely. Double check all items to avoid delays on your OPT extension.
- The Lewis University SEVIS School Code for STEM Opt recommendation is: CHI214F11210000
- “STEM OPT Requested Period” – Your start date should be the your post-completion OPT end date
- The “Qualifying Major and Classification of Programs (CIP) Code can be found on your I-20 in the “Program of Study” box

Step 4: Complete the USCIS Application Material

Obtain arrange the following materials listed below in order. You will need to send this packet to USCIS to be able to apply for the STEM OPT extension.

- Form I-765, “Application for Employment Authorization,” with fee and photographs stapled to it.
- Payment for the filing fee (see the [USCIS website](http://uscis.gov) for the current fee) payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security. You may use a personal check or a money order.
- Two photos that meet the Department of State specifications. There passport photos must be new and in color.
- Photocopy of your STEM I-20 with the OPT recommendation from the DSO. Make sure to obtain the newest copy of your I-20. Make sure to sign all I-20s. Sign in blue ink.
- Photocopies of all previous I-20s dating back to the beginning of your I-20 status

- Proof of the completion of your STEM studies (degree, certificate and/or transcript)
- I-94 documentation:
 1. Visit the [CBP I-94 website](#) to retrieve and print out a copy of your electronic Form I-94.
 2. If you last entered the U.S. on or before April 29, 2013: Photocopy of your I-94 Departure record card, front and back.
- Photocopy of your latest US visa stamp
- Copy of any previously used EAD card(s)

Note: You do **NOT** include your I-983 training plan with your application to USCIS. However, you must retain the plan (and any subsequent edits) for your records. We recommend that you and your employer keep a copy of the most up-to-date I-983 at work, in case of a DHS site visit.

Step 4: Mail Your Application

Make sure to mail your completed application packed to USCIS within 60 days of the Form I-20 issue data.

Depending on your address, please go to [USCIS Lockbox facilities website](#) to the correct mailing address.