24 MONTH OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) EXTENSION
FOR F-1 STUDENTS WITH A STEM DEGREE

What is a STEM degree?
This is a Bachelor’s, Master’s, or Doctoral degree in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM). A list of STEM degrees can be found on the web page https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf

Who is eligible for the OPT extension?
- Student completed all degree requirements (or for thesis/dissertation students, completed all coursework) and currently is engaged in a valid period of post-completion OPT.
- Student has a Bachelor’s, Master’s, or Doctoral degree in a STEM program.
- Student must have a job or a job offer from an E-Verify employer. This means that the employer is currently registered and is in good standing with the USCIS E-Verify program. The employer must also have an IRS Employer Identification Number (EIN).

When to apply for the OPT extension?
The student may file for the extension 90 days before the expiration date of the current OPT. All documents for the extension must reach USCIS before the OPT ending date and within 60 days of issuing the I-20 for the STEM OPT Extension.

When does the period of extension start?
The student’s period of STEM extension starts right after the ending date of the current OPT. The student may continue working while a timely filed OPT extension application is pending with USCIS. Work authorization is automatically extended for up to 180 days.

Can the student change employers while the STEM extension is pending?
The student may start working for a new employer if the new employer is registered with E-Verify and has an EIN number. The change must be reported to the Office of Immigration Services (OIS). A new, amended, I-765 should be sent to USCIS along with a new I-20.

Can the student travel while the STEM extension application is pending?
Yes, with a valid F-1 visa and STEM OPT I-20 endorsed for reentry within the last six months.

What types of employment are allowed?
Students authorized for the STEM extension must work at least 20 hours per week for an E-Verify employer, in a paid position directly related to the student’s STEM degree. Students may have multiple jobs, but all employers must be enrolled in E-Verify.

What are the limits of the unemployment period?
Students who receive a STEM extension may have up to 150 days of unemployment counting from the starting date indicated on the EAD for initial OPT. Each day during the period of OPT when the student does not have qualified employment counts as a day of unemployment.

What if the period of unemployment exceeds the limit?
A student who exceeds the unemployment period has violated the visa status unless he/she has taken one of the following steps (while the student is still in valid status):
- Applied to continue education by changing the level or transferring to another school.
- Departed the United States.
• Took action to otherwise maintain legal status.

**What does the student have to report to the OIS during the OPT period?**

**Within 10 days:** a student must report the following:
- Employment information: the date of starting or changing employment, employer's name and address, and loss of employment
- Change in any of the following: the student’s legal name, the student’s residential or mailing address, the student’s e-mail address or phone number

**Six month report.** Every six months starting from the start date of STEM OPT. Use our STEM OPT reporting form. Must be submitted within 10 days before or after the due date. Include:
- The student's full legal name
- Current mailing and residential address
- Name and address of the current employer
- Employment start date for the current employer

‘Evaluation on Student Progress’ due after the first year of the Extension (see the I-983)

‘Final Evaluation on Student Progress’ due after the second year of the OPT extension (see the I-983)

*Reporting can be done by completing our STEM OPT Reporting Form (and the Evaluation Form when required) and scanning/emailing it to us.*

**What must the employer report to school?**
The employer must notify the school when the student’s employment is terminated. The employer must send a letter to the OIS. The letter must include the student’s name, SEVIS ID# if available, and the date of termination. The report must be sent within 48 hours upon termination. It can be mailed, faxed, or scanned/emailed.

*The student must inform the employer about this requirement.*
Process to Apply for STEM OPT Extension

In order to issue the “STEM OPT Extension” I-20, you need to submit to the OIS the following documents (scan is acceptable):

1. Application for STEM OPT extension (page 4 of this handout).
2. A copy of your Degree Certificate.
3. A copy of EAD issued for your current OPT (front and back).

Upon receipt of the documents above, the “STEM OPT Extension” I-20 will be issued and sent to you. The I-983 is for our office only. Do not send the I-983 to USCIS.

List of documents that must be submitted to USCIS

1. (Optional) Form G-1145 “E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance”. You may download this form from the website http://www.uscis.gov.
2. Form I-765. Download this form from the website http://www.uscis.gov. Answer to #11: mark ‘Yes’. Which USCIS office? Use the Service Center code as listed on your EAD. Example: YSC = Potomac Service Center. Dates: startdate of post-completion OPT. Answer to #16: (c) (3) (C).
3. Filing Fee of $410.00. Check or money order must be made payable to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Place this check/money order on the top of your packet.
5. A copy of your Degree Certificate.
6. 2 recent, passport-style photographs taken no earlier than 30 days before submission of the OPT application. Lightly print your name, date of birth, and the I-94 Number on the back of each photo with a pencil or a pen. Photos must be 2x2 inches in size, with full frontal face position, identical, color, with a plain white or off-white background; between 1 inch and 1 3/8 inches from the bottom of the chin to the top of the head. It should be taken in normal street attire, without a hat or headgear. Uniforms are not acceptable except religious attire that is worn daily. If you normally wear prescription glasses, they should be worn for the picture. Dark glasses or non-prescription glasses with tinted lenses are not acceptable unless you need them for medical reasons. In the latter case, the medical certificate may be required.
7. Copy of the I-20 issued for STEM OPT extension
8. Copies (front and back) of all your I-20s, since the arrival date to the USA as an F-1 student
10. A copy of the Form I-94. You may download the form from the website http://www.cbp.gov/i94.
11. Copy of your Visa
12. Letter from your employer that includes job duties and specifies if you are a part-time or full-time employee.

The USCIS processing time is about three months, so be sure to give yourself enough time.

You may continue working for up to 180 days beyond the end date of your current EAD provided that USCIS receives your documents before the expiration date of your current EAD and within 60 days of the issue date of the “STEM OPT” I-20.
**Where to mail the STEM OPT packet**

STEM OPT documents should be mailed to USCIS Phoenix or Dallas Lockbox facilities depending on the mailing address you indicated on the form I-765

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If the mailing address on your form I-765:</th>
<th>Mail your application to:</th>
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For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries (regular or certified mail):  
USCIS  
PO Box 21281  
Phoenix, AZ 85036  

For Express Mail:  
USCIS  
Attn: AOS  
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S  
Suite 100  
Phoenix, AZ 85034 |
| Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, U.S. Virgin Islands, or West Virginia | **USCIS Dallas Lockbox**  
For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries (regular or certified mail):  
USCIS  
PO Box 660867  
Dallas, TX 75266  

For Express Mail:  
USCIS  
Attn: AOS  
2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business  
Suite 400  
Lewisville, TX 75067 |
The University of Akron
Office of Student & Scholar Immigration Services

APPLICATION FOR THE 24-MONTH STEM OPT EXTENSION

Information about you:

Your Name: _______________ Last First

Your UA ID# ___________________ Date of Birth ___________________ E-mail address ___________________ Phone # ___________________

Your Current Address ___________________

Your Major/Program ___________________ Level of Education (B.S., M.S., Ph.D.) ___________________

Program Competed? Yes _____ NO _____ Degree Received? Yes _____ NO _____

Starting/Ending dates of the OPT as indicated on your EAD __________________________

Information about your employment (you are employed or have a job offer):

The Company’s Name ___________________ E-Verify ID# ___________________ EIN Number ___________________

The Company’s Address ___________________

Your Title/Position ___________________ Your Business E-mail Address/Phone # ___________________

Has an H-1B petition been filed for you? Yes ____ No _____

If Yes, what is the result? ______________________________________________________________________________________ Pending/Approved/Denied/ Withdrawn

Information about your supervisor:

Name ___________________ Title/Position ___________________

E-mail Address ___________________ Phone Number ___________________

Please provide a short statement about how your employment relates to your degree: ________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

Student Certification: I have read and agree to comply with STEM OPT Extension rules and reporting requirements.

__________________________________________________________
Signature                      ___________________ Date