STEM OPT EXTENSION GUIDELINES

Eligible F-1 students who have completed a designated STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) degree may be eligible to apply for a 24-month STEM OPT Extension.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible, F-1 students:

- Must have authorization for their initial 12-month OPT period and must be working for a U.S. employer in a position directly related to their STEM degree field of study.
- Must have successfully completed a designated STEM degree.
- Must have a current or future job offer from a U.S. employer registered with E-Verify at the time of application for the STEM OPT Extension.

APPLICATION TIMELINE

- USCIS must receive a student’s STEM OPT Extension application by the end date of the student’s initial 12-month OPT period (as indicated on their EAD card).
- STEM OPT Extension applications may be submitted to USCIS for processing up to 90 days before a student’s initial 12-month OPT end date (as indicated on their EAD card).
- USCIS requires approximately 3 months to approve a STEM OPT Extension application.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

- All documents listed in the STEM OPT Extension Application Checklist must be submitted to DCISS to request a STEM OPT Extension I-20.
- Students must sign their new STEM OPT Extension I-20 before their STEM OPT Extension application can be submitted to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for processing.
- Students must submit completed STEM OPT Extension applications to an F-1 Counselor during a scheduled appointment (STEM OPT Extension applications may not be submitted during a weekly OPT Hand-In Session).
  - Contact the DCISS front desk to schedule an appointment, 310-825-1681.
  - If you are currently not in Los Angeles, please schedule a phone appointment with an F-1 Counselor.

STEM OPT Extension Application Checklist:

- $380.00 DCISS OPT Administrative Processing Fee – Paid Online (Payment Receipt Required)
- I-765 Form (www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-765.pdf)
- I-983 Form (instructions on how to complete the I-983 Form here)
- $410 check, cashier’s check, or money order payable to ‘U.S. Department of Homeland Security’ (please write your date of birth and SEVIS ID number on the front of the check)
- Copies of your I-94 Admission Record
  - Electronic I-94: Access and print record here: i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home
  - OR Paper I-94: Please copy both front and back sides
- 2 Copies of your most recent U.S. entry stamp in passport
☐ 2 U.S. style passport photos. Please see U.S. Style Passport Photo Guidelines (please write your name and SEVIS ID number on the back of each photo)

☐ 1 Copy of your most recent I-20

☐ 1 Copy of your passport photo page (must be valid at least 6 months into the future from your STEM OPT Extension application submission date)

☐ 1 Copy of your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) Card (front and back sides)

☐ 1 Copy of your STEM degree diploma

☐ Employment verification letter from employer (must indicate: job title, supervisor’s name, and employer’s contact information. Employer must be E-Verified.)

AFTER SUBMITTING AN OPT APPLICATION TO DCISS

- Applicants will receive a Notice of Action receipt from USCIS approximately 3-4 weeks from the date the STEM OPT Extension application was received by USCIS. The status of an OPT application can be viewed online with a Receipt Number at: https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do
- If a student’s STEM OPT Extension application is received by USCIS by the student’s initial 12-month OPT end date (as stated on the EAD card), they may continue employment beyond their EAD card end date up to 180 days while their STEM OPT Extension application is pending, until a final decision is made by USCIS.

OPT AUDIT/REPORTING REQUIREMENT

You must report the following information to DCISS every 6 months during your STEM OPT Extension period via the online OPT Audit/Report:
- Your residential address
- Employer’s name and address
- Status of current employment

FORM I-983 TRAINING PLAN FOR STEM OPT STUDENTS

A new Form I-983 must be completed and submitted to DCISS within 10 days of:
- Starting employment with a new E-Verified employer
- Any time there is a “material change” in the terms and conditions of the original I-983

Students must complete two self-evaluations during the course of their STEM OPT Extension period:
- The first one within 12 months of the STEM OPT start date
- The second one at the end of the STEM OPT Extension period

Please email updated Form I-983 Training Plans to dcissf1unit@saonet.ucla.edu (provide your UID in your email).

UNEMPLOYMENT DURING OPT

F-1 students with an authorized 24-month STEM OPT Extension will have an additional 60 days of allowed unemployment for a total of 150 days (including weekends and holidays) during their 36-month OPT period.

Additional Questions?

Please contact DCISS at 310-825-1681 to schedule an appointment with an F-1 Counselor.