OPT STEM EXTENSION GUIDELINES

Recipients of Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctorate degrees in designated STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) fields may be eligible for a one-time 17-month extension of Post-Completion OPT, for a total of 29 months of OPT authorization.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible, F-1 students:

- Must have authorization for their initial 12-month OPT period

- Must have successfully completed a Bachelor’s, Master’s or Doctoral degree in a field listed in the U.S Department of Homeland Security (DHS) STEM-Designated Degree Program list

- Must have a job offer or be employed by an employer registered with the “E-Verify” federal employment verification system at the time of application for the OPT STEM Extension (for more information on E-Verify, please visit www.dhs.gov/e-verify)

- Must not have been previously approved for a 17-month OPT STEM Extension

APPLICATION TIMELINE

- USCIS must receive a student’s OPT STEM Extension application by the end date of the student’s initial 12-month OPT period (as indicated on their EAD card).

- OPT STEM Extensions may be submitted to USCIS for processing as early as (but no earlier than) 120 days before a student’s initial 12-month OPT end date (as indicated on their EAD card).

- USCIS requires approximately 3 months to approve an OPT STEM Extension application.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

- All documents listed in the OPT STEM Extension Application Checklist must be submitted to DCISS to request an OPT STEM Extension I-20 before an OPT STEM Extension application can be submitted to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

- Submit completed OPT STEM Extension applications to an F-1 Counselor during a scheduled appointment. Please Note: OPT STEM Extension applications may not be submitted during a weekly OPT Hand-In Session.
  - Contact the DCISS 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.
OPT STEM Extension Application Checklist:

- $40.00 Online SEVIS User Fee - Payment History Printout required
- $380.00 check or money order made 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: [https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html](https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html)
  - 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. See [U.S. Style Passport Photo Guidelines](http://www.uscis.gov/files/pdf/i-765.pdf) (please write your name and SEVIS ID number on 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 OPT STEM Extension application submission date)
- 1 Copy of your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) Card (front and back sides)
- 1 Copy of UCLA 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 OPT 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](https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do)
- If a student’s OPT STEM 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 the OPT STEM 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 OPT STEM Extension period via the online [OPT Audit/Report](http://www.uscis.gov/files/pdf/i-765.pdf):

- Change of residential address and/or telephone number
- Name and address of employer / change in the name or address of employer
- Change or termination of employment

OPT EMPLOYMENT TIMELINE

F-1 students with an authorized 17-month OPT STEM Extension have a total of 120 days (including weekends and holidays) of allowed unemployment during their 29-month OPT period.

Additional Questions?

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