



## **STEM OPT 24-Month Extension Application Instructions**

Some F-1 students participating in Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) may be eligible for a 24-month extension of employment authorization. This extension is for F-1 OPT participants who have a qualifying STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics) degree.

The following steps outline the process of applying for the STEM OPT 24-Month Extension. Familiarize yourself with the process and refer to this document throughout the application process.

### **Step 1: Confirm your eligibility for the STEM OPT extension.**

You must meet the following [requirements](#) to be eligible for the STEM OPT extension:

- Must have a bachelor's degree or higher in a qualifying STEM field.
  - o If your qualifying degree is from a previous degree it must have been earned in the past 10 years by an SEVP certified school. Ask a DSO for details.
- You can find a list of qualifying degrees and their CIP codes at:  
<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub/additional-resources/eligible-cip-codes-for-the-stem-opt-extension>
- Must be in F-1 status
- Must have been granted and currently on a period of Post-Completion OPT
- Must have fewer than 90 days of unemployment in Post-Completion OPT
- Must have paid employment that meets the following requirements:
  - o Employer must be [enrolled in E-Verify](#)
  - o The job must offer at least 20 hours of work per week
  - o [Employer must meet STEM OPT Requirements](#)
  - o Employment must commensurate with your education level and provide formal training and learning objects related to your STEM degree
- Must not have already participated in the STEM extension at that degree level
- Must not have participated in the STEM extension twice previously

### **Step 2: Ensure your current address and employment information are correct in the SEVP Portal.**

### **Step 3: Complete and send the following forms to [immigration@tarleton.edu](mailto:immigration@tarleton.edu).**

- Tarleton STEM OPT Extension Form
- [Form I-983 Training plan](#)
  - o This form should be filled out with your employer. A Tarleton DSO will review this form to determine your eligibility and will use information on the form when requesting the STEM OPT 24-Month Extension in SEVIS. You are not required send this to USCIS unless requested.
- Ensure you have the most recent versions of the Form I-983.
- Tarleton STEM OPT Compliance Form

### **Step 4: Pick up your I-20 or arrange for it to be mailed to you.**

After your forms are reviewed and your plan approved by a DSO, a new Form I-20 with the STEM OPT extension will be created for you. Your I-20 with the requested STEM OPT 24-Month Extension can be issued up to 90 days before the expiration date of your current OPT. Let your DSO know if you will be able to pick your I-20 up or if you would like it mailed to you.

### **Step 5: Prepare your application.**

Once you receive your new I-20, sign and date the I-20. You will need to include the following documents in your application. All documents and copies must be clear and legible.

- a. 2" x 2" US passport style photo of you taken within the last 6 months
- b. Copy of your signed I-20 endorsed by a DSO within 60 days of filing your I-765
- c. [Copy of Form I-94](#)

- d. Copy of your post-completion EAD front and back
- e. Copy of your diploma to show that your degree is currently listed on the STEM Designated Degree Program List (<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub/additional-resources/eligible-cip-codes-for-the-stem-opt-extension>)
- f. **If you are seeking a STEM OPT Extension based on a previously earned STEM degree:**  
Copy of the front and back of your transcript to show that the institution is currently accredited by the U.S. Department of Education and SEVP-certified

### Step 6: Electronically submit your I-765 Application for Employment Authorization.

Please refer to the STEM OPT I-765 Filing Checklist for instructions explaining how to file your I-765 Application for Employment Authorization electronically through [Home | USCIS](#).

Keep in mind that it can take 3-5 months for USCIS to make their decision. You may apply up to 90 days before your current OPT expiration. Your STEM OPT application must be received by USCIS within 60 days of DSO recommendation AND **before** your current OPT authorization expires. You may NOT begin your STEM OPT position until you have received your new EAD from USCIS.

### Step 7: Decision

If your request for the STEM OPT 24-Month extension is granted by USCIS, you will have continued reporting requirements to comply with the terms of your employment. You will be required to regularly report to a Tarleton State University DSO while on your STEM OPT extension. These reports include:

- Employment Validations every 6 months
- Self-Evaluations at 12 and 24 months
- Changes to legal name, address, phone number (within 10 days of the change).
- Material Changes to Employment and Form I-983
  - o Change of employer's EIN
  - o Reduction of compensation
  - o Significant decrease in weekly hours worked
  - o Changes to learning objectives
  - o End of employment
  - o New employment
  - o Employer Noncompliance

**Reporting is your responsibility. You will not be reminded before your required employment validations and self-evaluations. You can find more information about reporting requirements on [Study in the States](#).**

Disclaimer: You can find the most up-to-date information regarding STEM OPT on the Study in the States, USCIS, and DHS websites.

Contact [immigration@tarleton.edu](mailto:immigration@tarleton.edu) if you have any questions.