

24-Month OPT Extension for students with STEM degrees

The **24-Month OPT STEM Extension** allows students who earn degrees in certain Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields to apply for an additional 24 months of OPT, allowing a total of 36 months.

The degree programs that qualify for a STEM extension from Feb 2, 2021 are listed in the [STEM Designated Degree Program List](#) *Note that the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code is printed next to “Major 1” in the Program of Study area on your CSUEB I-20.

Requirements for 24-month STEM extensions:

- Applicant is in an Active period of post-completion OPT at the time of requesting the OPT extension for STEM recommendation on the I-20
- Applicant has completed a degree in a [STEM eligible field](#) from a U.S. accredited institution with SEVP certification within the last 10 years and has not already utilized this degree to apply for a OPT STEM extension
- Or applicant is currently engaged in a STEM eligible Master’s or PhD program, has completed all degree-required coursework and lacks only the thesis or dissertation to complete the degree;
- Applicant files the [I-765 Application for Employment Authorization](#) with required fee to USCIS to request the STEM extension **prior** to the completion of the Active Post-Completion OPT period
- Applicant is working in a paid position, at least 20 hours a week for an E-Verified employer
- Applicant has filed a completed Form [I-983](#) with all attestations and supporting documentation to CIE to request the 24 Month OPT Extension
- Applicants current EAD expiration date provides eligibility for filing of the request

Eligibility and When to Apply:

Application Period:

The I-765 and supporting documents must be sent to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) regional office having jurisdiction over your address of residence. The earliest USCIS may receive the application is 90 days before the end date of your initial period of OPT and the latest is the date your EAD expires.

Extension of Work Authorization:

Students who timely file an application for the 24-Month OPT extension will be able to continue employment while the extension application is pending, until a final decision on the I-765 or for 180 days, whichever comes first.

Travel:

Although you may continue to work while the OPT extension application is pending, you will not be able to return to the US after a trip abroad after the first EAD has expired and before you receive the EAD for the 24-Month extension. As always, you will need to have a valid passport valid for 6 months into the future and a valid F-1 visa in your passport to return from a trip abroad in F-1 status.

Unemployment:

Student may not have more than 150 days of unemployment time during the entire period of Post-completion OPT (regular Post-completion OPT and 24 Month Extension OPT). This will constitute a violation of your F-1 status.

OPT Grace Period: Under 24-Month STEM OPT regulations, students may not apply for a STEM OPT extension after they have entered the 60 day grace period following the expiration of their Post Completion OPT EAD. Please plan ahead!

Types of Employment: Volunteer/unpaid and self-employment are NOT allowed. [STEM eligible employers](#) must have e-Verify & EIN numbers and the student must have a "bona fide employer-employee relationship". If a student uses a temporary or staffing agency to place them in a training opportunity, the agency can only complete and sign the Form I-983 if they provide the actual training relevant to the student's qualifying STEM degree. Please see [Study in the States](#) website for more information

Required Training Plan and Form I-983: Requires responsibility of the employer to provide a training plan related to the field of study, and attestations to wages and compensation being commensurate with "similarly situated U.S. workers". Also requires 6 Month validation reports, annual evaluations, and submission of a new I-983 in case of material changes to the original I-983 are now required. Employers must agree to Department of Homeland Security site visits, as well as provide attestations to wages and working conditions.

Processing Time: USCIS are currently taking 3-5 months to process OPT STEM applications.

Application Procedure

OPT STEM TUTORIAL

You must review our [OPT STEM Tutorial](#) before submitting your OPT STEM request I-20 to our office.

Obtaining OPT STEM Request I-20

Please email the completed/signed documents listed below to CIE for processing

1. **Completed [Form I-983](#)**- Helpful hints to complete the form are located [here](#).
 - a. DSO (CIE advisors) name and contact information is listed [here](#)
2. **Request for 24 Month STEM OPT I-20 form**- Page 3 of this handout
 - a. **Complete and sign this form.** Please remember that E-Verify is different from EIN
3. **Reporting Responsibilities form**- Page 4 of this handout.

OPT STEM Request I-20

CIE advisors will review your request, let you know of any required edits and email your OPT STEM Request I-20 when ready. Processing time is 3-5 business days.

Once you receive your I-20, you are responsible for reviewing the OPT and OPT STEM information as well as the OPT STEM Request on page 2. If no errors, then proceed.

Print out your OPT STEM Request I-20, SIGN and Date the I-20 then rescan it for your application.

Do NOT sign this I-20 electronically.

OPT STEM20 Request Form

STUDENT INFORMATION		
Last Name:		First Name:
NETID:	Phone:	Personal Email:

REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES

Please review the requirements and responsibilities below:

Address Updates You must update your SEVP Portal and MyCSUEB within 10 days of your address change. Please take a picture of your STEM EAD and email it to CIE upon receiving it.

Changing Employers If you change employers while on OPT STEM, please report to CIE by following the instructions on our [Changing Employers while on OPT STEM Page](#).

Material Changes to an Existing I-983: Please see [here](#) for when to report material changes

6- Month Validation: Every 6 months you must confirm all information is currently accurate in your SEVP Form and confirm such with your DSO. Your DSO will then submit your validation in SEVIS.

12- Month Evaluation and Validation: Same process as 6 month validation. **AND** you must submit your annual self-evaluation (page 5 of I-983) describing the progress of your training experience

18- Month Validation: Every 6 months you must confirm all information is currently accurate in your SEVP Form and confirm such with your DSO. Your DSO will then submit your validation in SEVIS.

24- Month Evaluation and Validation: Same process as 6 month validation. **AND** you must submit your annual self-evaluation (page 5 of I-983) describing the progress of your training experience.

Ending OPT Early