

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 STEM I-20 Request Form

STUDENT INFORMATION			
Last Name:	First Name:		
NETID:	Phone:	Personal Email:	
Current Address:			
SEVIS # N	Date of Current EAD Expiration: / /		
Your Major:	Degree Level:	Bachelor's	Master's Doctorate
I am certifying that I qualify to apply for OPT STEM. I have a degree with a STEM eligible CIP code, my employer is enrolled in E-Verify, I work in a paid position that is related to my field of study and is more than 20 hours a week.			
Current Employer Information *Please note that the E-Verify number is different from EIN			
Employer(Company) Name:			
Employer E-Verify #:	Paid Position	Yes	No
Job Title:			
2 sentences describing how your job is related to your major: *All All text must be visible and can't be cut off.			
1.			
2.			
Previous Employer Information (if any)			
Employer Name:			
Employment End Date:			
OPT STEM I-20 Request			
<i>I certify that I understand the responsibilities required for maintaining F-1 Status during my period of STEM OPT authorization as stated on the 24-Month STEM OPT Handout and I will validate my STEM OPT employment information every 6 months, submit the I-983 evaluations at 12 months, 24 months and upon departure of employer, upon any changes within 10 days, and submit an updated Form I-983 upon any material changes</i>			
Student's Signature:	Date:	NETID:	

I-20 Delivery: Your OPT I-20 will be electronically signed by our office and emailed to you. Electronic signatures on I-20's by DSO's are currently valid per [SEVP Guidance](#). You will be required to print your I-20, sign and date your I-20 with an ink pen and submit a copy of the signed I-20.

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.
● STEM EAD:	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 Portal 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 Portal 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:	If you decide to end your OPT early and depart the USA, you must notify your DSO so we can complete your SEVIS record.
● Transfer Out:	If you decide to transfer to another school during or after your OPT STEM, please follow our Transfer Out procedures. Please note your OPT STEM will end on the Transfer Release Date. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If you get admitted to another degree program at CSUEB, please work with your DSO to determine your OPT STEM end date and new program I-20 start date.
● Change of Status during STEM OPT:	If you change your status (e.g. from F-1 to H-1B, F-2, AOS) during the period of your STEM OPT, your OPT ends on the effective date of the USCIS action notice and any unused OPT time is lost. You must notify CIE of your change of status by submitting a copy of your USCIS approval notice and I-983 Evaluation form.
● Travel:	It is my responsibility to obtain a travel signature from CIE if I am going to travel outside the US while I am on OPT. A travel endorsement is only valid for 6 months. I must have a valid F-1 visa, valid passport, EAD card and a job offer in order to re-enter the US
● USCIS Notices:	I understand that I should inform CIE immediately upon receiving any notices from USCIS such as Rejection Notice, Request for Evidence (RFE), Notice of Intent to Deny, or Denial Notice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND SIGNATURE

I have read and now understand the above requirements. It is my responsibility to abide by the regulations governing OPT STEM and to maintain F-1 status. Failure to abide by the requirements is failure to maintain my F-1 status and may result in termination of my SEVIS record and thus my ability to work. In addition, failure to abide by the requirements could potentially affect any future immigration benefit applications filed with USCIS such as H-1B or Permanent Residency.

CIE is able to provide you with general guidance. However, any advice provided to you by our office, as well as the information in this packet, should not be construed as legal advice. Additionally, due to the fluid nature of governmental interpretation, the USCIS may change its interpretation of these immigration laws/regulations and eligibility requirements for benefits, at any time. We will do our best to provide you with the most current guidance. Each case is fact-specific and it is advised that you contact an experienced immigration attorney if you have questions regarding your situation.

Student Name:	NETID:
Student Signature:	DATE: