



This document is meant to serve as an overview and outline the steps for the STEM OPT Extension application process.

Please refer to the [Study in the States STEM OPT Hub](#) for complete information.

Eligibility

- ⇒ F-1 students approved for standard Post-Completion Optional Practical Training based on a STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) field that appears on the [DHS STEM-Designated Degree Program List](#) can apply to USCIS for a 24-month extension of post-completion OPT (for a total eligibility of up to 36 months.)
- ⇒ The student must have a job or job offer from an employer registered in the [E-Verify system](#).
- ⇒ A student whose period of standard post-completion OPT has already expired is ineligible to apply for the STEM OPT extension.
- ⇒ A minor field of study cannot serve as the basis for a 24-month STEM OPT extension.
- ⇒ An individual is eligible for two 24-month STEM OPT extensions, each after a higher level degree has been obtained.

When to apply

The student must apply for the STEM OPT extension before their standard period of post-completion OPT expires, but no earlier than 90 days before the end date on the EAD.

While application is pending:

- ◆ If a student's regular post-completion OPT expires after a STEM OPT [I-765](#) is properly and timely filed, the student's employment authorization is considered automatically extended for up to 180 days while the STEM OPT application is pending.
- ◆ Travel is not recommended for students who are in a 180-day period of interim employment while the STEM OPT extension is pending.

Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and dates:

- ◆ The employment authorization period for the 24-month OPT extension begins the day after the expiration of the initial post-completion OPT employment authorization and ends 24 months thereafter, regardless of the date the actual extension is approved.
- ◆ USCIS will issue a new EAD reflecting STEM OPT extension dates.

