Optional Practical Training
STEM EXTENSION:
University Center for International Education
3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy, E190 SU
Dayton, OH 45435
Ph: (937) 775-5745

The STEM OPT Extension is a 24-month extension of work authorization available to international students who are currently engaged in Optional Practical Training (OPT) and who have earned a qualifying degree in a science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) field. Students require a STEM OPT I-20 from ISSS as part of their application to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

In this guide, you will find:
- STEM OPT Eligibility & important notes
- Application Process
  - Timeline overview, and important dates
  - Steps to complete your application
  - Mailing your application to USCIS
  - Checklist of necessary documents
- Requirements during STEM OPT
  - Acceptable types of employment
  - Reporting requirements
  - About the SEVP Portal
- Frequently asked questions

ELIGIBILITY & IMPORTANT NOTES

All four of the following conditions must be met to be eligible for the 24-month OPT extension:

1. Students who have already been approved for 12 months of post-completion OPT; **and**
2. Who have earned a bachelor's or higher degree in a field included on the U.S. Government's list of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields within the last 10 years; **and**
3. Who are employed in a paid job directly related to his/her field of study; **and**
4. Who are working for an employer that is enrolled in the U.S. Government's E-Verify program.
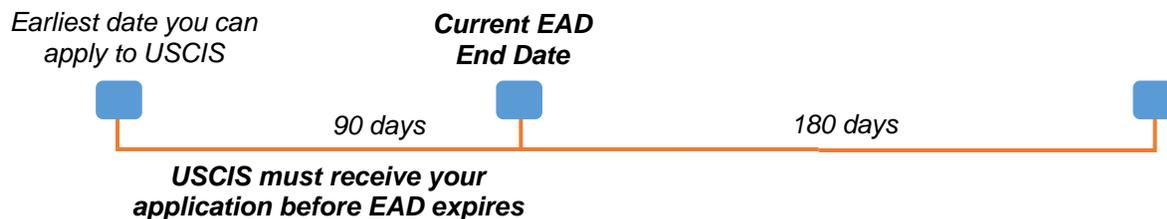
STEM eligible degree
See if your major is eligible. Look at the "Primary Major" on your I-20, then search for that code in the CIP code column of the STEM Designated Degree Programs list.

24-Month Extension Available Twice
After completing another qualifying degree at a higher degree level and completing another period of standard post-completion OPT based on that degree, a student would be eligible for one more 24-month STEM OPT extension. A student is limited to two STEM OPT extensions during his or her lifetime.

Optional Practical Training
STEM EXTENSION:
University Center for International Education
3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy, E190 SU
Dayton, OH 45435
Ph: (937) 775-5745

APPLICATION TIMELINE

Earliest date you can apply to USCIS

Current EAD End Date

90 days   *180 days*

USCIS must receive your application before EAD expires

- The earliest date to apply is 90 days before OPT end date (UCIE will not process your request before this date). USCIS will not accept applications filed earlier than this.
- USCIS must receive your application within 30 days after the STEM OPT I-20 is issued.
- USCIS must receive your application **before the expiration date of your Employment Authorization Document (EAD).**

What if my STEM extension is still pending after my OPT end date?
If you have timely filed the application for the STEM extension, you may continue working while your STEM application is pending, even if your EAD card has expired, until your OPT extension is processed or until 180 days have passed, whichever is sooner.

How do I choose my start date? What should my end date be?
The start date of the 24-month OPT extension will automatically be the day after the end date on your OPT EAD card and the end date will be 24 months later. These dates are not flexible, and are independent of the actual date your application is adjudicated.

Note: STEM OPT extension will be granted in one EAD period and cannot be split into smaller periods.

Optional Practical Training
STEM EXTENSION:

University Center for International Education
3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy, E190 SU
Dayton, OH 45435
Ph: (937) 775-5745

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. **Complete the e-form STEM OPT I-20 Request** in i-Raider. As a part of the form, you, you will be asked to upload a **completed I-983**. For assistance in completing this form, please view our *Guide to Completing the I-983* (download from the UCIE website). Except for the I-983, UCIE does not accept or review other OPT-related documents. It is the student's responsibility to prepare, review, and upload the final application packet to USCIS.

2. After reviewing your STEM OPT I-20 request**, UCIE will prepare a new I-20** for you with the STEM OPT recommendation. In most cases your I-20 will be ready in 5-7 business days. We will notify you via email when it is ready.

3. **Upload your application to uscis.gov.** After receiving your new I-20, you must prepare and upload your application packet to uscis.gov. **Gather the items on the Checklist (see next page).** Upload your application on time! Refer to the "Application Timeline" section to ensure your application will arrive to USCIS within the correct window.

4. **Receive your receipt notice.** Once you apply online through uscis.gov you will receive an immediate receipt. The receipt notice includes a tracking number that can be used to track the progress of your OPT application online. To check the status of your case, visit: https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/.

5. **Receive your EAD card.** Your card should arrive to the address listed on your I-765 approximately 3-4 months after USCIS receives your application. Upload photocopy of your new EAD in i-Raider

Optional Practical Training
STEM EXTENSION:

University Center for International Education
3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy, E190 SU
Dayton, OH 45435
Ph: (937) 775-5745

CHECKLIST

	Fee for I-765	*Refer to I-765 instructions at www.uscis.gov/i-765 for most recent fee amount. Cashier's check or money order are acceptable.*
	Two 2x2 inch full-face passport-style photos	o *The photos must be identical and color with a plain background.* o ***They must be no more than 30 days old when the I-765 is filed at USCIS.*** o *Head should be positioned directly facing the camera.* o *Photo should capture from slightly above top of hair to middle of chest.* o *Eyeglasses should be worn if normally used by the subject. Include headpieces if worn daily for religious purposes; they should not obscure or cast shadows on the eyes or any other part of the face.* o *Put photos in an envelope. Attach the fee and the photo envelope on top of the entire application (on the upper left-hand corner). Write your name and date of birht on back of photos in pencil.*
	USCIS Form I-765 (online application)	*Download from www.uscis.gov/i-765. Download our Guide to Completing the I-765 to make sure you fill it out properly (find this on the ISSS website).*
	Copy of STEM OPT I-20	*UCIE will create this after you submit the Request for STEM OPT I-20 to our office. Remember to sign your new I-20!*
	Copy of current EAD	*Make a color photocopy of the front and back of your current EAD card.*
	Copy of I-94	*Go to https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov to print your I-94*
	Copy of your passport pages showing biographical info and expiration date	*If the photo in the passport is not clear or varies widely from your current appearance, we recommend you send a clear copy of another form of identification, such as a state-issued driver's license.*
	Copy of proof of STEM degree	*Copy of diploma that shows your degree level and program of study* *OR transcript (official or unofficial) showing degree conferral*
	Copy of job offer letter	*Letter from employer that includes job duties and specifies part-time or full-time employment*

ACCEPTABLE TYPES OF EMPLOYMENT

A student authorized for a 24-month extension must work at least 20 hours per week for an E-Verify employer in a paid position directly related to his or her major. STEM OPT employment may include any of the following:

- ***Work for one or more employers.*** Students may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to each individual student's degree program and all employers must be enrolled in EVerify.
- ***Work for hire.*** This is also commonly referred to as 1099 employment where an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship. The company for whom the student is providing services must be registered with E-Verify. If requested by DHS, students must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract periods and the name and address of the contracting company.

However, **the two types of work below are NOT permitted** during STEM OPT:

Optional Practical Training
STEM EXTENSION:
University Center for International Education
3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy, E190 SU
Dayton, OH 45435
Ph: (937) 775-5745

- *Unpaid employment.* All STEM employment must be for an E-Verify employer in a paid position directly related to the major field of study.
- *Self-employed business owner.* Under the regulations, students may not fill out their own Form I-983, Sections 3 to 6, nor act as their own employer for the purposes of the form. *Therefore, self-employment is not acceptable for the purposes of STEM OPT employment.*

Unemployment Limit
During the STEM OPT period, students are allowed a maximum of **150** days of unemployment time, which includes any unemployment that was accrued during 12 month OPT.

MAINTAINING YOUR STATUS

Students approved for the extension have additional reporting requirements in order to maintain their status. Take special care to comply with these obligations, in order to maintain your F1 status. Failure to comply with this responsibility may result in difficulties when applying for any future immigration benefits, such as H-1B. Read below for specific instructions.

You are required to report any of the following through our STEM OPT Reporting form within 10 days:

- Starting a new job
- 6-month validation reports
- 12-month (need top of page 5 of I983 completed and uploaded)

- 24-month (need bottom of page 5 of the I983 completed and uploaded)

- Your employment address/location

- Your supervisor's name and contact information.

- You have left a job

Your legal name or contact information (phone number, mailing address) – PLEASE UPDATE THIS INFORMATION IN WINGS.

Finally, we recommend that students maintain evidence for each job: the position held, duration of that position, the job title, contact information for the student's supervisor or manager, and a description of the work.

Optional Practical Training
STEM EXTENSION:
University Center for International Education
3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy, E190 SU
Dayton, OH 45435
Ph: (937) 775-5745

About the SEVP Portal: This website from the Department of Homeland Security is a tool that F-1 students can use to fulfill their OPT reporting requirements directly. You will be able to take responsibility for the accuracy of your employment records.

Who can use the SEVP Portal?
- During the STEM OPT Extension, students can use the portal for some functions, but must still submit the I-983 to the ISSS office when leaving a job, starting a new job, or if there are any material changes to the employment.

How can you create your SEVP Portal account?
- After your OPT has been approved by USCIS, you will receive an email with instructions to create your SEVP Portal account.
- This email will come from do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov. If you do not see the email, check your spam or junk mail folder.
- This email will be sent **only** to your Wright State University email address.

To learn more about the SEVP Portal, visit the online SEVP Portal Help Hub.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How long can I remain in the US after my STEM OPT expires?
You may only work until the expiration date on your EAD card but you may remain in the US for 60 days after your STEM OPT ends. This is known as a "grace period" and will permit you to prepare to depart the US, transfer to a new institution, start a new degree program, or to apply for a change of status.

If you decide to transfer or start a new degree program at the end of your STEM OPT, you must transfer within the 60 day grace period. You must also start your new degree program within the next 5 months or the next available start date, whichever is sooner.

Only in the case that your employer has filed a timely H-1B petition requesting an employment start date of October 1 will you be permitted to remain legally in the US and continue working. Your permission to continue working and remain legally in the US will automatically end upon the rejection, denial or revocation of the H-1B petition.

Do I have to pay taxes while working on OPT?
Yes. You must pay state *and* federal income taxes.

What if I change employers while my STEM extension is still pending?
You must complete a new I-983 with your new employer and submit it to our office. You must also report this change through our STEM OPT Request & Reporting form by selecting this option: My STEM extension is pending. I have changed employers and am providing updated employment details. Once you have completed this process, our office will report the change to the USCIS.