
General Information and Checklist for F-1 Students -- OPT STEM Extension FILING ONLINE --

OPT STEM Extension may be available to students who have obtained a degree in the fields of **Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics**. It is a one-time extension of your current post-completion OPT for an additional 24 months (making the total OPT eligibility 36 months). It must first be adjudicated (approved) by the United States Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS).

If you are approved for the STEM Extension, you will receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD Card) which shows the dates you are eligible to work in the United States.

Overview:

- Only two STEM Extensions are granted per lifetime – the second STEM extension must be at a higher educational level than the degree that served as the basis for your first STEM OPT extension
- You may apply for the STEM extension up to 90 days prior to the expiration date of the current OPT employment authorization.
- Your new EAD Card with the approved STEM Extension will begin the day after your 12-month EAD card expires and will be valid for 24 months – this is regardless of the date on which your application for STEM Extension was adjudicated.
- The 24-month extension is granted consecutively & cannot be split into smaller terms
- You are allowed to change employers during your STEM Extension, but any new employer must meet all of the STEM requirements
- If your current EAD Card expires while application for the STEM Extension has been received by USCIS but is still pending, you are eligible to continue employment for up to 180 days or to the date a decision is made, whichever comes first.
- If your application for STEM Extension is denied, you will have the usual 60-day grace period to make arrangements to return to your home country.

Requirements:

- Must currently be on post-completion OPT
- Verified completion of a degree on the STEM Designated Degree Program List
 - Can be a previous STEM degree earned in the U.S. at an SEVP-certified school if you have not used a STEM extension for that degree (or a higher degree) yet.
 - Previous degree must have been conferred in the last 10 years.
 - Current job is directly related to the STEM degree previously earned.
- Be employed and paid for at least 20 hours per week in work directly related to your field of study
- Employer must be registered with the US Government's E-Verify program
- **Form I-983 must be completed by student and employer and filed with OISS. Plan in Form I-983 must be followed throughout 24-month extension.**
- **Student must report current address and employment information at 6 and 18 month reporting marks AND a self-evaluation at the 12 and 24 month reporting marks (in addition to updating address and employment information).**

Application Process:

- Review this information sheet in full

- **[Submit I-983 training plan to employer and then completed plan to OISS](#)**
- OISS reviews Form I-983 and approves. Issues new I-20 with STEM extension.
- Gather all the documents required (list found on Application Checklist, page 2) ELECTRONICALLY
- Sign & submit the attached Statement of Understanding & STEM Extension Request Form (page 3)
- Make an appointment to have your application & documents reviewed by OISS
- Apply by e-filing no earlier than 90 days before the expiration of your current OPT and no later than 30 days before OPT expiration.

Application Checklist: (Don't forget to file I-983 with International Office but don't send to USCIS)

- Review the General Information Sheet for OPT STEM Extension provided
- Assemble the following documents electronically:

Register for a USCIS Account here: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>

I-94 form www.cbp.gov/i94 (PDF)

Passport information & photo page with expiration date, valid for at least 6 months

Previous (current) EAD Card – front and back

OPT I-20 with **new** recommendation from International Office – make sure you sign page 1

Credit card or bank account information

Digital Passport Style photo: Test it to ensure it will be accepted here: <https://tsg.phototool.state.gov/photo>

Verification of graduation from HCU (transcript or copy of your HCU Diploma)

ONLY IF your STEM OPT extension is based on a degree earned prior to HCU, provide proof of accreditation, e.g. screenshot from school or accreditor's website.

- Sign the Statement of Understanding & STEM Extension Request Form
- Make an appointment with OISS (bring this checklist and application packet with you!)

USCIS Registration:

1. Go to: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>
2. Scroll Down and Click "File Online" in the Blue Box.
3. This will take you to a sign in page. Click on "create an account" if you don't have an online USCIS account.
4. Sign up by typing your email twice. Personal email is good to use.
5. It will send a confirmation email to you. Go to your email inbox, check your email, and click the confirmation link.
6. Read the terms of use, scroll down, and click "I agree."
7. Create a password. You need to type it twice.
8. You have to pick a way to have a 2-step verification method. Most people pick SMS text message, but other options are email and authentication app. If you pick text message, put your cell number in the box. Click submit.
9. Confirm the verification works by putting in the verification code.
10. The next page will provide a backup code. Please save this code somewhere safe in case you need it in the future. You can export the page as a PDF on your computer if needed.
11. Provide password reset answers. You need to select 5 questions and provide personal answers. Click submit!
12. You'll be taken to the main USCIS account page

To file an I-765 online:

1. From the main USCIS account page, click on “my USCIS.”
2. For account type, click “I am an applicant, petitioner or requestor.”
3. Click on “File a form online.”
4. Select the form you want to file online: Select Form I-765. Click “start form.”
5. Read the instructions and click “next.”
6. Read through the next page and click “Start.”
7. What is your eligibility category? Click the appropriate status and answer the other questions on the page. (For STEM Extension, on “What is your degree,” make sure include the STEM part of your major. Example: BS in Biology)
8. Answer the rest of the questions on the page. You may need to reach out to your company for the E-verify number. Click next.
9. For OPT applications, click “initial permission to accept employment.” For STEM OPT applications, click, “renewal of permission to accept employment.” If you have ever filed an I-765 in the past, click yes for “Have you previously filed an I-765?” Click next.
10. Only say yes to if someone is assisting you with completing this application if you are using an attorney for assistance. Click next.
11. Enter information about your name. Click next. Enter contact information. Click next. Enter personal information. Click next. Enter home country information. Click next. Enter citizenship information. Click next. Enter USCIS information. A number is your USCIS number from your EAD card, if you have one. You may not have a USCIS online account number. Click next. Enter Social Security information. Click next.
12. Evidence:
 - a. Upload passport photo. Make sure you have tested it here before you add it to your application.
 - b. Upload your most recent I-94.
 - c. EAD card: Upload the front and back of your most recent EAD card AND your most recent passport biographical page
 - d. I-20: Upload the I-20 for STEM extension given to you by the International Office for the STEM extension.
 - e. College Degree – upload your diploma and/or transcript showing degree conferral
 - f. Institutional accreditation: Only needed if your STEM Extension is based on a prior degree (outside of HCU)
13. Additional Information:
 - a. Add response
 - b. Section: Getting Started
 - c. Page: Basis of eligibility
 - d. Question: What is your eligibility category?
 - e. Additional information: Current OPT authorization, full time, mm/dd/yyyy to mm/dd/yyyy and add any CPT authorization. Example: CPT Authorization, part time, ABC Company, 06/01/2020-12/1/2020
 - f. Save response
14. Click on view draft snapshot to save a copy of your answers. Review your application. Click Next.
15. Read and agree to Applicant’s statement. Click next. Read Applicant’s Declaration and Certification. Type your name as your signature. Click next.
16. Pay the fee. You should have a receipt notice by email automatically! You should track your application for updates at least once per week.



Office of International Student Services

7502 Fondren Road, Houston, TX 77074

Fax: (281)-3292 Email: goglobal@hc.edu

www.hc.edu/international

Statement of Understanding & STEM Extension Request Form

Name..... H#.....
Last First Middle

Degree: Email:

Please initial next to each statement

_____ I have not previously received a 24-month OPT extension after earning a higher STEM degree and my degree that is the basis for my current period of OPT is a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree in one of the degree programs on the current STEM Designated Degree Program List, published on the SEVP Web site at www.ice.gov/sevis/stemlist.htm

_____ My employer is registered in the E-Verify program, as evidenced by either a valid E-Verify company identification number or, if my employer is using a designated agent to perform the E-Verify queries, a valid E-Verify client company identification number. The employer is a participant in good standing in the E-Verify program.

_____ My employer agrees to report the termination or departure of my OPT to the DSO at HCU or through any other means or process identified by DHS if the termination or departure is prior to end of the authorized period of OPT. Such reporting must be made within 48 hours of the event. My employer shall consider a worker to have departed when the employer knows that I have left the employment or if I have not reported for work for a period of 5 consecutive business days without the consent of the employer, whichever occurs earlier.

_____ I understand that the Duration of status while on post-completion OPT is defined as the period beginning when my OPT Extension application was properly filed and pending approval, including the authorized period of post-completion OPT, and ending 60 days after the OPT employment authorization expires (allowing me to prepare for departure, change educational levels at the same school, or transfer to a new program at a different school).

_____ I understand that during post-completion OPT my F-1 status is dependent upon employment. I may not accrue a total of more than 90 days of unemployment during any post-completion OPT carried out under the initial post-completion OPT authorization. If I am granted a 24-month OPT extension, I may not accrue a total of more than 120 days of unemployment during the total OPT period comprising any post-completion OPT carried out under the initial post-completion OPT authorization and the subsequent 24-month extension.

_____ I understand I am required to report to OISS within 10 days of any change of legal name, residential or mailing address, employer name and/or employer address. Even if there are no changes to the above information, student must still update information with OISS every six months.

_____ I understand that the Office of International Student Services advises students NOT to travel until the STEM Extension application has been approved and a new EAD Card has been received.

Student Signature Date/...../.....

DSO Signature Verifying Request Date/...../.....