



**AUBURN UNIVERSITY
AT MONTGOMERY**

**OFFICE OF
GLOBAL INITIATIVES**

STEM Extension OPT

The STEM OPT extension is a 24-month period of temporary training that directly relates to an F-1 student's **program of study** in an approved STEM field.

Eligible F-1 students with STEM degrees who finish their program of study and participate in an initial period of regular **post-completion OPT** (often for 12 months) have the option to apply for a STEM OPT extension. Students may not apply for STEM OPT extensions during the 60-day grace period following an initial period of regular post-completion OPT.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

The F-1 student must:

- Be on a period of standard Post-Completion OPT
- Hold a degree in a field of study (indicated on the I-20) **which qualifies as STEM eligible** according to the official **STEM Designated Degree Program List**
- Have a job offer from an employer enrolled in E-Verify
- Demonstrate the job is directly related to a STEM field
- Prepare and sign the Training Plan (**Form I-983**)
- Apply before your current Post-Completion period of OPT expires.

The employer must:

- Be enrolled in E-Verify
- Have a Federal Employer Identification Number
- Agree to a the **terms of STEM OPT** by completing their sections of the Training Plan (**Form I-983**)

WHEN TO APPLY:

Here are the basic steps of a STEM OPT application:

The student must pay the **\$780 nonrefundable STEM Extension fee**. The application must be submitted to the Office of Global Initiatives **no later than three weeks** prior to the end of your current Post-Completion OPT. The STEM OPT application must be received by USCIS before the expiration of the current OPT period. However, you can submit an application to USCIS as early as 90 days prior to the end of the current OPT period.

If you timely file your STEM OPT extension application, you will be able to continue employment while your application is pending, until a final decision is made by USCIS or for 180 days beyond the expiration of your Post-Completion OPT, whichever comes first. It normally takes up to 120 days for USCIS to process STEM OPT extension applications.

Prepare your online STEM OPT application:

- Complete the **\$780 non-refundable STEM Extension fee.**
- Create **MyUSCIS online account** to submit application
- Completed **I-765 Form**
- Digital copy of completed **I-983 Form**
- Digital copy of STEM OPT Requested I-20 issued by OGI. (*Must be signed by student and DSO*)
- Digital copy of your Degree Certificate
- Digital copy of your passport (front and back)
- Digital copy of previously issued EAD card (front and back)
- Digital copy of your I-94 (which can be obtained at **CBP.gov/I94**).
- Digital 2x2 passport-style photo
 - **The photos must meet the following requirements:**
 - *Frame subject with full face, front view, eyes open*
 - *Photo must present full head from top of hair to bottom of chin and measure 1" to 1-3/8"*
 - *Center head within frame*
 - *No glasses, hats, or headwear*
 - *Background should be plain white or off-white*
 - *Have a natural expression (no smiling)*
 - *Contain no distracting shadows on face or background*
- A debit or credit card to pay the US Department of Homeland Security's \$470 fee
- Email all above mentioned documents to **global@aum.edu**, and a DSO will contact you once they begin processing your STEM OPT Requested I-20. You may also make an appointment to bring your application materials by the Office of Global Initiatives using the link on your \$780 payment receipt.

Review the STEM Extension Materials Checklist and prepare all application materials for online application. **Please note – your application must be received by USCIS before your current OPT expires and within 60 days of the issuance of your new STEM OPT I-20.

EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS:

- Employment must be paid.
- Employment must be a minimum of 20 hours per week.
- Employment must be directly related to your course of study.
- Limitation on Unemployment for the STEM OPT Extension. Students approved for the 24-month STEM OPT extension may not accrue more than a total of 150 days of unemployment throughout their entire 36 months on OPT.

Time spent outside the United States, if not employed by a U.S. employer, is counted towards the 150-day period of unemployment. To count as "employed" a student should be able to provide evidence, acquired from the student's employer, to verify that he or she worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of reported employment.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

Students must submit to the Office of Global Initiatives self-evaluations via the I-983 during the first 12 months on the STEM OPT extension and at the completion of the 24-month extension period or at the conclusion of employment, whichever comes first. Evaluations should be submitted within 10 days of the required date.

Student and employers must report to Office of Global Initiatives a change in any of the following via the I-983:

- Employer name and address
- Decrease in student's compensation
- Employer's EIN
- Termination of employment

Students are required to report to Office of Global Initiatives within 10 days with any change in the following via I-983:

- Legal Name
- Residential address
- Employer name and address
- Change in status of current employment, including loss of employment, change of status to H-1B, transfer to another F-1 program, or change in employers. If you change employers, you and your employer will need to complete a new I-983 and submit to the Office of Global Initiatives.

Students are required to report to the Office of Global Initiatives every 6 months - regardless if there is a change or not - the following:

- Legal name
- Residential address
- Employer name and address
- Status of current employment

If you have any additional questions, please contact The Office of Global Initiatives at AUM.

Email: global@aum.edu

Phone Number: 334-244-3375