

DO NOT MAIL THIS WITH YOUR APPLICATION



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EAST CENTRAL UNIVERSITY 24-month F-1 OPT Extension for Students with STEM Degrees

During the initial period of 12 months of Optional Practical Training (OPT), certain government-designated STEM degree-holders (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) in the following fields may be eligible for an additional 24 months of OPT, for a total of 36 months. A student is limited to two STEM OPT extensions during his or her lifetime. The degree programs that qualify for a STEM extension are listed on the [Study in the States](#) website. Note: that the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code is printed next to "Primary Major" under the student name on page 1 of the I-20.

Requirements for 24-month STEM extensions:

- Student must be currently participating in a 12-month period of OPT, administered by ECU and working for a U.S. employer in a job directly related to the student's major area of study.
- Student must have successfully completed a bachelor's or masters in a field on the DHS STEM Designated Degree Program List.
- Student must have a job or job offer from an employer registered with the E-Verify employment verification system. (E-Verify information at <http://www.uscis.gov/E-Verify>). *Note: Students are not allowed to use a volunteer/unpaid opportunity or self-employment as a basis for a STEM OPT extension*
- Student must not have an outstanding balance owed to ECU and must pay a 24-month STEM extension OPT administration fee of \$200.
- The ECU International Office must recommend the 24-month OPT extension in SEVIS, after verifying a student's eligibility, certifying that the student's degree is on the STEM Designated Degree Program List, and ensuring that the student is aware of his or her responsibilities for maintaining status while on OPT.
- The student must fully complete an individualized [Form I-983](#) "Mentoring and Training Plan" and obtain requisite signatures from an appropriate individual in the employer's organization. The student must then submit the completed, signed form to the ECU International Office Director. *(Note: Any time there is a "material change" in the terms and conditions of the I-983, the student must submit an updated I-983 Form to the ECU International Office Director within 10 days of the change.)*
- The student must apply for the 24-month extension on Form I-765 with the required fee. 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.
- Employer must agree to report the termination or departure of the student to ECU's Designated School Official (DSO) by email to intlstu@ecok.edu. An employer must consider a worker to have departed when the employer knows the student has left employment, or if the student has not reported for work for a period of 5 consecutive business days without the employer's consent. The employer should provide the student's name, SEVIS ID number (if available), and the date that the student's employment ended.

Validation and reporting requirements during STEM extension:

- 1) Students with an approved 24-month OPT extension must complete the [validation report](#) (see below form) to the DSO every six months starting from the date the extension begins and ending when;
 - a) the student's F-1 status ends,
 - b) the student changes educational levels at the same school,
 - c) the student transfers to another school,
 - d) the 24-month OPT extension ends

The validation report must include:

- i. student's full name and SEVIS number
- ii. current residence address and mailing address if different from residence address
- iii. name and address of the current employer
- iv. date student began working for the current employer

*****If the student does not report participation, SEVIS may automatically terminate the record with the reason "Failure to Report While on OPT."*****

- 2) The student must complete two [self-evaluations](#) using the Form I-983 during the course of his or her STEM OPT period: the first one within 12 months of the STEM OPT start date and a second, concluding evaluation at

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the end of his or her STEM OPT period. Evaluations must be signed by the student and his or her immediate supervisor, and then submitted to the DSO.

To complete these self-evaluations, the student needs to specify the evaluation date range (i.e., the timeline considered during the evaluation) and:

- a) Assess their overall performance using the measures identified in the agreed upon training plan.
 - b) Evaluate their success in applying and acquiring the new knowledge, skills and competencies that were previously identified in the plan.
 - c) Discuss accomplishments, successful projects, overall contributions, etc., that occurred during the specified review period.
 - d) Address whether there are any modifications to the objectives and goals for projects or new areas for skill and competency development.
 - e) After the student signs a completed evaluation, the employer must show concurrence with the assessment information that the student has entered by providing the employer's Official with Signatory Authority.
- 3) In addition to the validation reports, students on a STEM extension must notify the DSO within 10 days of:
- a) any change of name or residence or mailing address
 - b) any change of employer, giving the name and address of the new employer
 - c) any change to the name and address of this employer
 - d) any interruption of this employment
 - e) any material change to information provided on the original I-983 Form

Use the [24 Month STEM Extension Validation Report](#) to submit the validation report and the other changes listed above. Contact the DSO via email at intlstu@ecok.edu to request the Report.

Application Process:

Speak with the International Student Services Office to discuss your intention to pursue the 24-month STEM extension. After this discussion, an administration fee of \$200 will be placed on your ECU account. This fee will need to be paid and any past balance owed to the University will also need to be paid before you will be permitted to move forward with the OPT process.

The following items are required to apply for a STEM extension:

- a completed Form I-983 (Go to uscis.gov, or scroll to end of document)
- a completed I-765 form (Go to <http://www.uscis.gov/I-765>, or scroll to end of document)
- your I-94 record
- your EAD card, and all previous cards if applicable

The DSO will issue a new I-20 recommending the STEM OPT extension starting on the day following the expiration of your current EAD and ending 24 months later.

Application Period:

The I-765 and supporting documents must be sent to the correct [USCIS Service Center](#). The earliest USCIS may receive the application is **90 days prior** to 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.

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 the your EAD has expired and not before you receive the new EAD for the 24-month extension. As always, you will need to have an unexpired passport valid for 6 months into the future, an unexpired F-1 visa, and an I-20 endorsed for travel in order to return from a trip abroad in F-1 status.

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Checklist for the application to USCIS:

1. Form I-983 (Go to uscis.gov, or scroll to end of document)
2. I-765 Application for Employment Eligibility (Go to <http://www.uscis.gov/I-765>, or scroll to end of document)

Question 20: Eligibility code is **(c)(3)(C)**

Question 21: List your degree and major as it appears on page 1 of your I-20, and your employer name and number as listed in the government's E-verify program.

3. MONEY ORDER for filing the I-765 [filing fee](#) payable to “**U.S. Department of Homeland Security**”. Write "USCIS I-765" in the memo line of the check or money order.
4. Copy of I-94 card, (If not electronic, then copy both sides of original card).
5. Copy of your current EAD card (both sides) and any previous EAD cards (if applicable)
6. Copy of your most recent diploma that shows the degree name and the date awarded.
7. Official or unofficial transcript as evidence of your program of study being in a government-designated STEM field
8. Two passport-style photos (http://travel.state.gov/passport/pptphotoreq/pptphotoreq_5333.html) meeting specifications of the link and taken within 30 days of filing the application.
9. Original I-20 recommending the STEM extension, endorsed by the DSO
USCIS must receive the application within 30 days of DSO's endorsement.
10. Copy of the identification page(s) of your passport, including photo, and expiration date
11. Filing locations can vary based on the volume of applications. Always, check the [USCIS Direct Filing Address](#) webpage for the most current location.