

# 17-Month STEM Extension for Optional Practical Training (OPT)

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## WHAT IS A “STEM” EXTENSION?

It is an extension of Optional Practical Training (OPT) for an additional 17 months for students who meet specific eligibility requirements

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

F-1 students in valid immigration status who are currently on OPT and who has 1) completed a Bachelor’s, Master’s, or Ph.D. in a STEM field AND 2) a job or job offer from an employer registered with the E-verify system.

## WHAT IS A “STEM” FIELD?

STEM stands for “Science Technology Engineering Mathematics.” The STEM field, however, is very specific. Not all majors under these four general areas of study may be eligible. It depends on the code/major listed on your I-20, and whether that code/major is on the STEM list. The most recent comprehensive STEM list can be found online at <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/stemlist.htm>. Below is a listing of UCR majors (with the major as it should appear on your I-20 for eligibility for a STEM extension). This list is not exhaustive and is subject to change by the U.S. government. If you find your major below but it is not the same as the major listed on your I-20, please see an advisor.

CIP CODE	MAJOR AS IT APPEARS ON YOUR I-20	UCR MAJOR	CIP CODE	MAJOR AS IT APPEARS ON YOUR I-20	UCR MAJOR
110401	INFORMATION SCIENCE/STUDIES	Information Systems	260301	BOTANY/PLANT BIOLOGY	Plant Biology
110701	COMPUTER SCIENCE	Computer Science	260305	PLANT PATHOLOGY/PHYTOPATHOLOGY	Plant Pathology
140101	ENGINEERING, GENERAL	Engineering (Prep)	260406	CELL/CELLULAR AND MOLECULAR BIOLOGY	Cell, Molecular, and Developmental Biology
140101	ENGINEERING, GENERAL	Pre-Engineering	260406	CELL/CELLULAR AND MOLECULAR BIOLOGY	Cell, Molecular, and Developmental Biology
140101	ENGINEERING, GENERAL	Engineering (Undeclared)	260502	MICROBIOLOGY, GENERAL	Microbiology
140501	BIOMEDICAL/MEDICAL ENGINEERING	Bioengineering	260702	ENTOMOLOGY	Entomology
140901	COMPUTER ENGINEERING, GENERAL	Computer Engineering	260801	GENETICS, GENERAL	Genetics
140901	COMPUTER ENGINEERING, GENERAL	Computer Science	261006	ENVIRONMENTAL TOXICOLOGY	Environmental Toxicology
140901	COMPUTER ENGINEERING, GENERAL	Computer Science	261103	BIOINFORMATICS	Genetics, Genomics and Bioinformatics
141001	ELECTRICAL, ELECTRONICS AND COMMUNICATIONS ENGINEERING	Electrical Engineering	261301	ECOLOGY	Evolution, Ecology and Organismal Biology
141401	ENVIRONMENTAL/ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ENGINEERING	Environmental Engineering	261306	POPULATION BIOLOGY	Population Biology
141801	MATERIALS SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING	Materials Science and Engineering	261307	CONSERVATION BIOLOGY	Conservation Biology
141901	MECHANICAL ENGINEERING	Mechanical Engineering	270101	MATHEMATICS, GENERAL	Mathematics
260101	BIOLOGY/BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES, GENERAL	Biology	270101	MATHEMATICS, GENERAL	Mathematics (Applied)
260101	BIOLOGY/BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES, GENERAL	Biological Sciences	270101	MATHEMATICS, GENERAL	Undeclared-Mathematical Sciences
260101	BIOLOGY/BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES, GENERAL	Undeclared-Life Sciences	270501	STATISTICS, GENERAL	Statistics
260102	BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES, GENERAL	Biomedical Sciences	400101	PHYSICAL SCIENCES	Undeclared-Physical Sciences
260202	BIOCHEMISTRY	Biochemistry	400101	PHYSICAL SCIENCES, GENERAL	Physical Sciences
260210	BIOCHEMISTRY/ BIOPHYSICS AND MOLECULAR BIOLOGY	Biochemistry and Molecular Biology	400501	CHEMISTRY, GENERAL	Chemistry
260301	BOTANY/PLANT BIOLOGY	Botany	400601	GEOLOGY/EARTH SCIENCES, GENERAL	Geology
260301	BOTANY/PLANT BIOLOGY	Botany (Plant Genetics)	400601	GEOLOGY/EARTH SCIENCES, GENERAL	Geological Sciences
260301	BOTANY/PLANT BIOLOGY	Botany/Plant Sciences	400603	GEPHYSICS AND SEISMOLOGY	Geophysics
260301	BOTANY/PLANT BIOLOGY	Plant Biology (Plant Genetics)	400801	PHYSICS, GENERAL	Physics

### **WHAT IS “E-VERIFY?” HOW DO I KNOW IF MY EMPLOYER IS REGISTERED WITH “E-VERIFY?”**

E-verify is a new online system used by the Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration to process I-9 forms electronically. For more information you can visit: [http://www.dhs.gov/xprevprot/programs/gc\\_1185221678150.shtm](http://www.dhs.gov/xprevprot/programs/gc_1185221678150.shtm). The only way you will be know if your employer is registered with E-verify is to ask them. There is currently no public list of companies registered with E-verify.

### **WHEN SHOULD I FILE FOR THE STEM EXTENSION?**

If you are eligible, the Department of Homeland Security recommends filing for the extension 90-120 days in advance of your OPT end date. *Please note that the California Service Center MUST receive your STEM Extension application BEFORE your current EAD card expires.*

### **HOW CAN I FILE FOR AN EXTENSION?**

The process is very similar to an OPT application. If you are still located in the area, you should make an appointment with an advisor once you’ve gathered all the required items. These include:

1. I-765 Application for Employment Authorization (download from the USCIS website: <http://www.uscis.gov> under “Forms”)
2. Check or money order for \$340 (I-765 application fee) made payable to the “Department of Homeland Security”
3. Copies of your EAD card, passport, OPT I-20, F-1 visa, front and back of your I-94 card
4. 2 passport-style photos
5. Letter on letterhead from your employer (or the Human Resources Dept.) indicating you are currently employed and they are registered with E-verify. The letter should include their name (as they registered it with E-verify) and E-verify registration number

### **WHERE SHOULD I FILE MY APPLICATION?**

Unlike your OPT application, you will file this application (once it is complete) with the nearest USCIS Service Center. If you live outside of California, please check with our office to find out the name and address of the Service Center. It will depend on where you currently reside. The Service Center must receive your application within 30 days of the date our office makes the recommendation for your extension in SEVIS.

### **IS THERE ANY WAY FOR ME TO TRACK THE PROGRESS OF MY OPT APPLICATION?**

Yes, once the Service Center receives your application packet, they will send you a receipt with a receipt number. You can use this receipt number to track the status of your application online at <https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/jsps/index.jsp>. Please provide a copy of this receipt to our office.

### **WHAT IF MY APPLICATION IS NOT PROCESSED BEFORE MY CURRENT OPT ENDS? CAN I CONTINUE TO WORK?**

Yes. You are allowed to continue to work up to 180 days beyond your OPT expiration date while your application is pending as long as you have filed your STEM Extension application before your OPT ended. Make sure you keep your receipt in safe place as this will be the only evidence of your pending STEM extension application.

### **CAN I TRAVEL WHILE MY APPLICATION IS PENDING?**

**No.** If you leave the U.S., even if you have a valid F-1 visa, while your STEM Extension application is pending it will be considered an abandonment of your application and you would not be eligible to re-enter using your OPT I-20.

### **WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO ONCE MY APPLICATION IS APPROVED?**

You must provide a copy of your new EAD card to our office once you receive it. In addition, U.S. federal regulations require that an F-1 student approved for a STEM extension:

1. Must be working in a paid position for an E-verify employer for at least 20 hours per week at all times
2. Is only allowed an additional 30 days of unemployment if the extension is approved (which means you have a maximum aggregate of 120 days of unemployment during the entire 29 months of your OPT)
3. Must have a job related to your STEM degree
4. Must report any change of address, name, employer (including the employer name and address) and loss of employment within 10 days to our office
5. Must send our office a validation report every 6 months once your extension is approved (beginning at the start date) and until your F-1 status or OPT ends.

In addition, your employer is also responsible for reporting any interruption or termination of employment to our office. You should make sure they are aware of this requirement.

### **WHAT DOES THE 6-MONTH VALIDATION REPORT NEED TO INCLUDE AND HOW CAN I SEND IT?**

This report will include your name, SEVIS ID number, U.S. mailing and residential addresses, employer name and address and your employment start date for your current employer. You should email it to an advisor ([deja.gworek@ucr.edu](mailto:deja.gworek@ucr.edu) or [kelly.hinosawa@ucr.edu](mailto:kelly.hinosawa@ucr.edu)), fax it to our office (951-827-3778) or drop it off in hard copy to our office (located in the Statistics-Computer Bldg, Room 1669).

### **CAN I CHANGE JOBS ONCE MY STEM EXTENSION HAS BEEN APPROVED? CAN I WORK FOR AN EMPLOYER WHO IS NOT REGISTERED WITH E-VERIFY?**

While you can change jobs under your STEM extension, you **MUST** work for an employer that is registered with E-verify. This applies to multiple employment. Every employer you have must be registered with E-verify.