

WHAT IS A “STEM” EXTENSION?

It is an extension of Optional Practical Training (OPT) for an additional 24 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. If your current program at UCR is not in a STEM field but you previously received a lower degree in a STEM field (from UCR or another institution) and did not use OPT for that program, you may also be eligible for a STEM extension based on the previous degree.

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 do not find your major on this list, please contact an international student advisor for clarification.**

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, Business Informatics	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, & Developmental Biology
140101	ENGINEERING, GENERAL	Pre-Engineering	260406	CELL/CELLULAR AND MOLECULAR BIOLOGY	Cell, Molecular, & Developmental Biology
140101	ENGINEERING, GENERAL	Engineering (Undeclared)	260502	MICROBIOLOGY, GENERAL	Microbiology
140501	BIOMEDICAL/MEDICAL ENGINEERING	Bioengineering	260702	ENTOMOLOGY	Entomology
140701	CHEMICAL ENGINEERING	Chemical and Env't Engineering	260801	GENETICS, GENERAL	Genetics
140901	COMPUTER ENGINEERING, GENERAL	Computer Engineering	261006	ENVIRONMENTAL TOXICOLOGY	Environmental Toxicology
140901	COMPUTER ENGINEERING, GENERAL	Computer Science	261103	BIOINFORMATICS	Genetics, Genomics & Bioinformatics
140901	COMPUTER ENGINEERING, GENERAL	Computer Science	261301	ECOLOGY	Evolution, Ecology & Organismal Biology
141001	ELECTRICAL, ELECTRONICS AND COMMUNICATIONS ENGINEERING	Electrical Engineering	261303	EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY	Evolutionary Biology / Joint Doct.
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	26.1501	NEUROSCIENCE	Neuroscience
260101	BIOLOGY/BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES, GENERAL	Biology	270101	MATHEMATICS, GENERAL	Mathematics
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	GEOPHYSICS 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 free 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/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. If you are outside of the Riverside area, you may send the documents to our office for review. These include:

1. I-765 Application for Employment Authorization (download from the USCIS website: <http://www.uscis.gov> under “Forms”) Make sure to either type the form (recommended) or write using black ink. Make sure to sign using black ink.
2. Check or money order for \$380 (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 or I94 print out and admission stamp*
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 company ID number as well as a brief description of what your training plan is.
6. Copy of diploma and transcripts (on transcript paper) from the university indicating your degree (the level, major, and graduation date)*
7. A brief statement (1-5 sentences) of how your job directly relates to your degree program from UCR.
8. Form I-983, the Formal Training Plan, to be filled out by you and your supervisor at your site of employment. Find this form at <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/form-i-983-overview>

*Photocopies should be made in BLACK and WHITE.

After reviewing your application, an advisor will issue you a new I-20 for the STEM OPT extension application. You will need to include a copy of this I-20 in your finalized packet when you send it to the appropriate USCIS lockbox.

WHERE SHOULD I FILE MY APPLICATION?

You will file this application (once it is complete) with the appropriate USCIS lockbox. The Service Center must receive your application within 30 days of the date our office makes the recommendation for your extension in SEVIS and before your current post-completion OPT authorization expires.

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 www.uscis.gov. 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 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 should include your name, SEVIS ID number, U.S. mailing and residential addresses, employer name and employer address, and updated evaluation on the Form I-983. You may send your report to us at internationalcenter@ucr.edu. An advisor will contact you via your primary email address when there is an alert in SEVIS, indicating that your report is due. Make sure that you continue to check your UCR email account and/or that you've updated your primary email address with the ISRC. It is important to reply to this email in a timely manner so as to not risk violating your status.

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.