STEM OPT RECOMMENDATION REQUEST

Students with a Department of Homeland Security-approved STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) major and are currently on Post-Completion OPT are eligible to apply for the 24-Month STEM Extension of Post-Completion OPT (also known as “STEM Extension”). A list of approved STEM majors can be found at https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/eligible-cip-codes-for-the.stem-opt-extension. Effective March 10, 2016, the new 24-month STEM OPT policy replaces the previous 17-month STEM OPT policy. This form and the accompanying instructions have been updated to reflect the new 24-month STEM OPT policy.

CAN YOU APPLY?
You are eligible for a STEM extension of Optional Practical Training (OPT) if:
✓ You have completed a Bachelor’s, Master’s, or Doctoral degree in a STEM field while studying in the US
✓ You are currently participating in post-completion OPT
✓ You are currently working/will soon be working in a paid position of at least 20 hours/week for an employer who is registered in the E-Verify program
✓ You have not applied for STEM OPT for this degree or degree level before
✓ You have not accumulated more than 90 days of unemployment on current OPT authorization.

WHEN TO APPLY:
✓ The Form I-765, Form I-983, supporting evidence and $380 ($410 as of 12/23/16) fee must be received at USCIS before the current OPT Employment Authorization Document (EAD) expires
✓ USCIS recommends that students file beginning 120 days before the expiration date of the current OPT EAD.

HOW TO APPLY FOR OIP RECOMMENDATION:
Email the following to the Office of International Programs at oip@utep.edu in ONE email:
✓ Completed “Application for STEM Extension of OPT.” (Only Word document files will be accepted. Handwritten and/or scanned forms will not be accepted.)
✓ Copy of completed Form I-983 "Training Plan for STEM OPT Students" (one per each employer).
✓ If applying for STEM OPT on the basis of a STEM degree not obtained at UTEP, also submit a copy of your diploma and transcript issued by the other US university.

Once your complete application has been received, OIP will issue you an I-20 with a recommendation for a STEM Extension and will contact you to let you know your I-20 is ready. Once you have your I-20 from OIP, you will need to mail your application packet to USCIS***. See below for additional information.

MAILING YOUR PACKET TO USCIS:
Once you have picked up your I-20, mail it to USCIS with the following:
✓ Form I-765 (typed)
✓ Form G-1145 (optional)
✓ Official or unofficial transcript from UTEP (official is recommended) and a copy of your diploma* (*For those students still completing their thesis/dissertation, include a letter from your department that states that you have met all other requirements for your degree.)
✓ Copy of EAD for current OPT
✓ Copy of your new I-20 with the STEM OPT Recommendation and all previous I-20s
✓ Copy of the Form I-983 “Training Plan for STEM OPT Students” completed by you and your employer
✓ Copy of visa, passport, and I-94. If you have a paper I-94, submit a copy of the front and back of the card. If you do not have a paper I-94, print your electronic record from https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/request.html.
✓ Two passport size photos (2” x 2”), with your name and I-94 number written on the back of each photo. Visit http://bit.ly/optphotos for photo specifications.
✓ Application fee of $380 ($410 as of 12/23/16) (check or money order) to “US Department of Homeland Security”

***NOTE: Your application must be received at USCIS within 30 days from the time the new I-20 is signed or your application will be denied.***
MAINTENANCE OF STUDENT STATUS AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS DURING STEM OPT:
In order to maintain valid status while on STEM OPT, there are several things you will need to report to OIP within specific time frames. We will then update SEVIS accordingly.

Report the following changes to OIP within 10 days of the change:
- Legal name
- Residential address
- Employer, giving the employer name and employer address
- Any material changes to your Form I-983 "Training Plan for STEM OPT Students"

Report the following change to OIP within 5 business days of the change:
- Loss of employment (must be reported within 5 business days)

Every 6 months:
- Validate your STEM OPT every six months by submitting the OPT Notification form to OIP. This must be done every 6 months through the end of your STEM OPT period even if there are no changes to report. The OPT Notification form and it is available at www.sa.utep.edu/oip

Within the first 12 months:
- Submit the “Evaluation of Student Progress” (part of the Form I-983 “Training Plan for STEM OPT Students”) within 12 months of the STEM OPT starting date listed on your EAD.

At the end of STEM OPT
- Submit the “Final Evaluation of Student Progress” (part of the Form I-983 “Training Plan for STEM OPT Students”) at the end of your STEM OPT period.
- Notify OIP of your post-STEM OPT plans
STEM OPT EXTENSION STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

Please initial that you understand the following:

If I have completed a Bachelor’s, Master’s or doctoral degree in a STEM category, and if currently in a period of post-completion OPT, I understand that I am eligible to apply only twice for OPT extension of 24 months throughout my academic career. If I am granted the OPT extension, I am to seek employment directly related to my STEM degree. I understand that I must work more than 20 hours each week.

While I am working on STEM OPT, I understand that the U.S. federal government still considers me a student and that STEM OPT is a work authorization for practical training which is granted to me through my F-1 student visa.

I understand that during my first 12 months of OPT I must not accrue more than 90 days of unemployment and that I am allowed only 60 additional unemployment days during my STEM OPT extension, for a maximum of 150 days of unemployment, accrued cumulatively. If I am unemployed for longer than this, then I realize that I will lose my F-1 student status as well as the remaining portion of my STEM OPT authorization.

I realize that I must report the changes listed below to OIP within 10 days of the change using the OPT Reporting Form.

I realize I must submit the “Evaluation of Student Progress” (part of the Form I-983 “Training Plan for STEM OPT Students”) within 12 months of the STEM OPT starting date listed on my EAD.

I realize I must submit the “Final Evaluation of Student Progress” (part of the Form I-983 “Training Plan for STEM OPT Students” at the end of my STEM OPT period.

I realize that in order to qualify for a STEM extension, my employer had to be enrolled in the E-Verify program. This includes enrolling me as an employee. I understand that as a part of this, if I leave my position, my employer must report it to the federal government via the E-Verify program within 48 hours.

I understand that while on STEM OPT, I must be employed in a paid position by employers enrolled in e-verify AND I must submit an I-983 form for each employer.

INDICATE HOW YOU WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE YOUR STEM OPT I-20 FROM OIP:

☐ In person
☐ Use University Express Mail Services (Charges apply. See https://study.eshipglobal.com/)
☐ Prepay priority mail online at www.usps.com (you will need to forward the shipping label to the OIP advisor who has your application)
☐ I will send an authorized person*. Name of designee:

*Note: this person must bring a photo ID.
First Name:
Last Name:
UTEP ID #: 8
SEVIS ID #: N00
Phone Number:
Email:
Dates on current OPT EAD Card (mm/dd/yy-mm/dd/yy):
Major of degree completed:
Is your current major a STEM degree (yes or no)?

If no, list the STEM major and degree level you will use as a basis for your STEM OPT application. (You cannot have previously used this degree for a STEM OPT application. This degree must have been earned in the US. If the prior degree was not earned at UTEP, you need to also provide the Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) Code which you can obtain by contacting your previous school.)

Employer Name (Company Name):
Employer Identification Number (EIN):
Job Title:
Start Date (mm/dd/yy):
Is this job full time (more than 20 hours per week)? (yes or no)
Employer Address:
Supervisor Last Name:
Supervisor First Name:
Supervisor Phone Number:
Supervisor Email:
Explain how this job is related to your course of study:

By typing my name and UTEP ID number, I certify that I have read the information above and understand that my obligations for maintenance of F-1 status while on OPT. Additionally, I certify that the information I have provided on this form is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Name: UTEP ID#: Date:

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<tr>
<th>Degree Awarded: (in SHADEGR)</th>
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<td>Previous Authorized OPT Dates: (in SEVIS)</td>
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<td>What date is 120 days prior to end of current OPT?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total unemployment days:</td>
<td>Other Notes:</td>
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</tbody>
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Office of International Programs
Division of Student Affairs
www.sa.utep.edu/oip

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