UCLA | **Dashew Center**
for International Students & Scholars

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STEM OPT EXTENSION GUIDELINES

F-1 students who have completed a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) designated degree and secured a paid, full-time (at least 20 hours per week) employment offer in a position directly related to their STEM degree with an E-Verified employer may be eligible to apply for the 24-month STEM OPT Extension.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

If applying based on their most recent UCLA STEM degree, F-1 students:

- Must have completed a STEM Designated Program list (based on the Classification of Instructional Program [CIP] code on page 1 of their current I-20)
    - Please note, the Dashew Center does not determine your UCLA major's CIP code.
- Must be in their initial 12-month Post-Completion OPT period (EAD card must not have already expired).
- Must not have exceeded 90 days of unemployment time during their initial 12-month OPT period
- Must have a bona fide employer-employee relationship with an employer enrolled in the U.S. E-Verify system.
- Must have a paid, full-time employment offer (20 or more hours per week) for a position directly related to their major and appropriate for their degree level.
    - Volunteer/unpaid positions are not eligible. Self-employment is not eligible.
- Must be within the U.S. with F-1 status at the time they submit their STEM OPT Extension application to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

If applying based on a previous STEM degree (*in addition to the requirements listed above*):

- STEM degree must have been completed within 10 years of the STEM OPT Extension application submission date to USCIS

Note: F-1 students may be authorized for the STEM OPT Extension no more than 2 times in their lifetime.

APPLICATION TIMELINE

- STEM OPT Extension applications may be submitted to USCIS for processing as early as (but no earlier than) 90 days before a student's initial 12-month OPT EAD card end date.
- All documents listed in the STEM OPT Extension I-20 Request Checklist must be submitted in MyBruin International to receive a STEM OPT Extension I-20. The I-20 containing the STEM OPT Extension recommendation is required for the STEM OPT application with USCIS.

- USCIS must receive your STEM OPT Extension application within 60 days of your STEM OPT I-20 issue date (as indicated on page 1 of your STEM OPT I-20) —or— by the end date of your initial 12-month OPT period as indicated on your EAD card (whichever deadline comes first).
- USCIS requires approximately 3-5 months to adjudicate a STEM OPT Extension application.
- Students with a timely filed and pending STEM OPT Extension application with USCIS may continue employment for up to 180 days after their initial 12-month OPT EAD card end date.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Step 1: **Report all of your OPT employment information through the SEVP Portal**

Step 2: **Review the STEM OPT Extension Online Workshop**

Step 3: **Pay the $380 Dashew Center STEM OPT Extension Administrative Processing Fee**
Log in to your Dashew Center account and click on the "STEM OPT Administrative Processing Fee" to pay the fee.   Save a copy of your emailed payment confirmation to include in your STEM OPT Extension I-20 Request.

Step 4: **Prepare and complete your STEM OPT Extension I-20 Request materials**

Step 5: **Submit your STEM OPT Extension I-20 Request in MyBruin International**

Step 6: **Receive your STEM OPT Extension I-20 (10 business days from submission date).**
Note: *STEM OPT I-20, once issued, can be accessed and downloaded in MyBruin International.*

Step 7: **Prepare your STEM OPT Extension application materials for submission to USCIS for processing** (see STEM OPT Extension Application Submission Instructions)

STEM OPT Extension I-20 Request Checklist:

- ☐ **$380 Dashew Center STEM OPT Extension Administrative Processing Fee Payment Receipt**
- ☐ **Completed Form I-983** *(See Form I-983 Instructions. For a sample form, see the STEM OPT Extension Workshop)*
- ☐ **1 copy of your I-94 Admission Record**
  - **I-94 Admission Record:** https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/recent-search
  - **OR Paper I-94:** Please copy both front and back sides
- ☐ **1 copy of your I-94 Travel History**
  - I-94 Travel History: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/history-search
- ☐ **1 copy of your passport biographical page** (must be valid at least 6 months into the future from your STEM OPT Extension application submission date)
- ☐ **1 copy of your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) Card** (front and back sides)
- ☐ **1 copy of your STEM degree diploma or official transcript**

☐ **Employment verification letter from employer on official letterhead** (*must include: job title, supervisor's name, employer's contact information, and employer's E-Verify ID*)

If applying based on a previous STEM degree (in addition to checklist requirements above):

☐ Copy of your previous STEM degree I-20

☐ Copy of your previous STEM degree diploma or official transcript

☐ Copy of most your recent UCLA diploma or official transcript

AFTER YOU RECEIVE YOUR NEW STEM OPT EXTENSION I-20:

Please print out, sign, and date page 1 of the I-20 in the "Student Attestation" section. After you sign and date the STEM OPT Extension I-20, make copies of pages 1 and 2 to include in your final STEM OPT Extension application materials to USCIS. You can submit your complete STEM OPT Extension application materials to USCIS via online or mail.

Please refer to the [STEM OPT Extension Application Submission Instructions](#) for guidance on how to prepare your STEM OPT Extension application for submission to USCIS for processing.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- **USCIS must <u>receive</u> your completed STEM OPT Extension application materials within 60 days of the issuance date listed on page 1 of your STEM OPT Extension I-20. Applications received by USCIS later than 60 days from the issuance date on page 1 of the STEM OPT Extension I-20 will be denied.**

- **USCIS must <u>receive</u> your completed STEM OPT Extension application materials before your initial 12-month OPT period ends. Applications received by USCIS after the initial 12-month OPT periods ends will be denied.**

Notice of Action Receipt Notice:

- Shortly after submitting your application online, you will be issued an application receipt number and will be able to access your application receipt notice through your MyUSCIS account.
- For applications submitted by mail, you will receive a Notice of Action receipt in the mail (to the 'Mailing Address' you provided on your I-765 Form) from USCIS approximately 3-4 weeks from the date your STEM OPT Extension application was received by USCIS. This receipt notice will include your application receipt number.

To check the status of your STEM OPT application, please log in to your [MyUSCIS](#) account or use the [USCIS Case Status](#) page.

- Students with a timely filed STEM OPT Extension application may continue employment for up to 180 days after their initial 12-month OPT EAD card end date while their STEM OPT Extension application is pending.
    - If you do not receive your STEM OPT Extension EAD card by your initial, 12-month OPT EAD card end date, you will have to update your I-9 with your employer to continue employment beyond your current EAD card end date while your STEM OPT Extension

application is pending. For information on how to update your I-9 with your employer, please visit the [USCIS Foreign Academic Students](#) page.

- If STEM OPT Extension is approved, you will receive your STEM Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card in the mail at the mailing address provided on your I-765 Form in about 2-3 weeks after receiving the approval notice.

STEM OPT EXTENSION REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Students on the STEM OPT Extension must report the information below to maintain valid F-1 status during their STEM OPT Extension period — this period begins from the start date as stated on your STEM OPT EAD card.

1. Submit copies of the front and back of my STEM OPT Extension EAD card in [MyBruin International](#)

2. You must confirm the following information to the Dashew Center every *6 months* during your STEM OPT Extension period by submitting a STEM OPT Validation report in [MyBruin International](#).
   - Your passport name
   - Your residential address
   - Employer's name and address
   - Status of current employment

3. Self-Evaluations

   Students must submit **two** self-evaluations during their STEM OPT Extension period. Self-evaluations can be submitted by completing a STEM OPT Validation request in [MyBruin International.](#)

   - 12-month self-evaluation: Submit the top half of page 5 of [Form I-983](#)
   - Final 24-month self-evaluation: submit the bottom half of page 5 of [Form I-983](#)

NOTES: Students can submit these two evaluations 30 days prior to the deadline and no later than 10 days after. Students should only submit page 5 of the [Form I-983](#).

4. Report material changes to an existing Form I-983 by submitting a STEM OPT Employer Update Request in [MyBruin International](#) within 10 days of the change. You will be required to upload an updated Form I-983 to the online request.

   Material changes are any changes or deviations from the original Form I-983 that you completed with the employer. If anything on the Form I-983 has changed, this is a material change.

5. Changing Employers

Students who change employment during their STEM OPT Extension period must submit a STEM OPT Employer Update Request in MyBruin International within 10 days of the change. You must upload the following in the online request:

- A completed final self-evaluation (bottom half of page 5 of Form I-983) to report your previous employment end date.
- A completed Form I-983 (pages 1-4) to report your new employment.
- A copy of your new employment verification letter on official letterhead (*must include: job title, supervisor's name, employer's contact information, and employer's E-Verify ID).*

6. End of Employment
   Students must report the end of employment within 10 days of their employment end date. You can report employment end date/termination by submitting a STEM OPT Employer Update in MyBruin International. You will be asked to upload the final self-evaluation (bottom half of page 5 of Form I-983) for your previous employment in the online request.

7. Employer Non-Compliance
   If a student on the STEM OPT Extension believes that their employer is not complying with the terms and conditions of the 24-month STEM OPT Extension regulations, the Form I-983 instructions, and the completed Form I-983 on file with their Designated School Official (DSO), the student may:
   - Contact the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) at U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) by following the instructions on ICE.gov.
   - Report violations through the Homeland Security Investigations tip submission form.

   (A period of student unemployment, caused by an employer's failure to comply with program requirements, on its own will not affect the STEM OPT student's status so long as the student reports changes in employment status and adheres to the overall unemployment limits.)

STEM OPT EMPLOYMENT TYPES

- **Paid Employment** - A student must work at least 20 hours per week.

- **Multiple Employers** - A student may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be at least 20 hours per week, paid, related to their degree program and all employers must be enrolled in E-Verify. Students must submit a completed Form I-983 for each employer.

- **Work for Hire (Contractual)** - This is commonly referred to as 1099 employment, where an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than employment relationship. The company for whom the student is providing services must be registered with E-Verify. If requested by DHS, the student must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract period and the name and address of the contracting company.

- **Third-Party Employers** - Employment must constitute a bona fide employer-employee relationship. The Form I-983 must be signed by the E-Verified employer (e.g., staffing agency or consulting firm) who is providing the practical training experience. The third-party employer can only complete and sign the Form I-983 as an employer if:
  - The third-party employer is E-Verified and
  - The third-party employer provides and oversees the training plan.

UNEMPLOYMENT DURING OPT

Students on the STEM OPT Extension have an additional 60 calendar days—including weekends and holidays—of allowed unemployment time, in addition to any remaining unemployment days from the initial 12-month OPT.

Additional Questions?

Please review the STEM OPT Extension Workshop document or schedule an appointment.