F-1 STEM OPT Extension Frequently Asked Questions

Who is eligible for the STEM extension?

In order to be eligible for this extension, you must:

- Already be on valid OPT based on a STEM-eligible degree: https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/eligible-cip-codes-for-the-stem-opt-extension
- Have had fewer than 90 days of unemployment while on OPT
- Be employed full-time by, or have a full-time job offer from, an employer who is registered in the E-Verify employment verification system

What is E-Verify?

E-Verify is an internet-based system operated by USCIS in partnership with the Social Security Administration to help employers determine the employment eligibility of their employees. You can find more information about E-Verify here: http://www.uscis.gov/everify. You can check if your company is listed with E-Verify at https://www.uscis.gov/e-verify/about-program/e-verify-employers-search-tool. Instructions on how your employer can access their E-Verify number can be found here.

What is the Form I-983? How do I complete it and who do I send it to?

This form should be completed by your employer and you. It should be submitted to your international student advisor. The goal of the formal training plan is to articulate your learning objectives and affirm the employer's commitment to helping you achieve those objectives.

If you change employers, you must submit a new I-983. If your employer has questions about the I-983, please direct them to this resource page: https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/employers-and-the-form-i-983

My OPT expires in summer, 2016, and I am worried I will not get my new EAD card before my current one expires.

If your post-completion OPT expires while your STEM OPT application is pending, you will receive an automatic extension of employment authorization of up to 180 days upon the expiration of the current employment authorization." You may wish to direct your Human Resources office to the F-1 OPT STEM Extension section on page 21 of M-274, the Employer Guide to the I-9.

My employer is asking for a new EAD card with the 24 month time frame for the I-9, the document that verifies my eligibility for employment. What can I show them?

You can direct them to the F-1 OPT STEM Extension section on page 21 of M-274, the Employer Guide to the I-9.

Previously, an F-1 student could only apply for the STEM extension one time. I heard you can apply twice with the new federal ruling. Can you explain how this will work?

There is a lifetime limit of **two** periods of 24-month STEM OPT; each occurring after a *higher* degree level has been obtained. You cannot go backwards (i.e. if you did not use it at the bachelor's level you cannot apply for a second bachelor's after completing your STEM Extension at KGI and get another STEM period).

Where can I find more information?

You can find detailed information on the STEM Hub: https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub