24-Month OPT STEM Extension
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

- **What is an OPT STEM extension?**
  An OPT STEM extension is additional employment time that can be added to your current OPT if you are an F-1 student who meets the eligibility requirements.

- **Who is eligible for a 24-Month OPT STEM extension?**
  You are eligible for a 24-Month OPT STEM extension if you have earned a degree in a specialized field and are currently on OPT. See page 2 for the eligibility requirements.

- **What degrees qualify for a 24-Month OPT STEM extension?**
  In order to qualify for a 24-Month, you must have a degree in a STEM field (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics). For a complete list of STEM degrees visit: *https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf.*

- **Can I apply for an OPT STEM extension using a previous degree from another school?**
  Yes, you may be eligible to apply for an OPT STEM extension if you previously earned a STEM degree from another American college or university **NOTE:** Your previous school must be an accredited institution, certified by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to enroll F-1 students.

- **Can I apply for the 24-Month OPT STEM extension even if I already received one for 17 months?**
  You can apply for an additional 7 months of OPT STEM if you have at least 150 days remaining on your current OPT and if you file your request by August 8, 2016.

- **When can I apply for a 24-Month OPT STEM extension?**
  Effective May 10, 2016, you can apply for a 24-Month STEM extension no earlier than 90 days before your post-completion OPT expires.

- **What are the application requirements to apply for my extension?**
  See page 3 for the OPT STEM extension application requirements and list of supporting documents.

- **How soon must I mail my documents to Immigration after I receive my OPT STEM I-20 from the International Students Office?**
  You must send your OPT STEM application to U.S. Immigration within 60 days of the date you received the recommendation from the international student adviser. The ISO strongly recommends that you mail your completed application and documents within 30 days

- **How long must I wait to receive my OPT STEM extension?**
  In general, the OPT STEM extension application processing time is 90 days.

- **Can continue working while my OPT STEM application is still being processed?**
  Yes, your current OPT will automatically be extended. You may continue working while your OPT STEM application is being processed for a maximum of 180 days.

- **Can I change employers while my OPT STEM application is still pending?**
  Yes,you may change employers while your OPT STEM extension is waiting. However, your new employer must also be on E-Verify. You must also report this information to the International Student Advisor within 10 days of the change; your new employer's information will be submitted and posted on your SEVIS record only after your 24 Month STEM OPT has been approved.

- **How many hours per week am I required to work on a 24-Month OPT STEM extension?**
  You are required to work at least 20 hours per week or more.

- **Can I be self-employed and qualify for the 24-Month OPT STEM extension?**
  No, you cannot be self-employed while on the 24 OPT STEM extension.

- **Can I do volunteer work if I cannot find a job during my OPT STEM extension?**
  No, you are not permitted to do volunteer work during the new 24-Month STEM extension.

- **What is form I-983 and do I really need complete it when I apply for the OPT STEM extension?**
  Form I-983 is the Student Training Program Form. You and your employer or supervisor must complete it and submit it to the international student advisor to show evidence that you will be receiving academic and training benefits during your 24-Month OPT STEM employment period; it stays in your OPT file in the International Students Office .

- **Can I apply for more than one 24-Month OPT STEM extension?**
  If eligible, you can apply a maximum of two 24-Month OPT STEM extensions.

- **Can I work for more than one employer while on my OPT STEM extension?**
  Yes, you are permitted to work for multiple employers while on your OPT STEM extension but each job must be directly related to your major. You must also report this employment information to the international student adviser.

- **What is a self-evaluation and how can I provide one?**
  A self-evaluation is a report that the student must submit to the international student advisor once a year regarding the progress of his/her training with the current employer(s).

- **What is a 6-month report and how should I provide one?**

A 6-month report is an update that each student on an OPT STEM extension must provide the international student advisor with information about his/her current name, immigration status, address and employment information.

- **If I become unemployed after my OPT STEM extension has been approved, how much time do I have to find another job?**
  Under the new 24-Month OPT STEM extension, students may not remain unemployed for more than 150 days.

- **Can I be self-employed and start my own business on the 24-Month OPT STEM extension?**
  You may not be self-employed under the new 24-Month OPT STEM extension.