

## STEM OPT Extension

### **STEM OPT Eligibility**

Eligible F-1 nonimmigrant students with STEM degrees from Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)-certified and accredited U.S. colleges and universities may apply for a 24-month STEM OPT extension. Interested F-1 students must apply for and receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

DHS grants STEM OPT extensions to eligible F-1 students who are currently in a period of post-completion OPT once per degree level (i.e., bachelor's, master's or doctorate). A student may participate twice in the STEM-OPT extension over the course of their academic career. Students may not apply for STEM-OPT extensions during the 60-day grace period following an initial (usually 12-month) period of post-completion OPT.

To participate twice in the STEM-OPT extension, a student must earn a second qualifying degree at a higher education level and must be participating in an initial period of OPT at the time they apply to USCIS for their second STEM OPT extension. In some cases, students may be eligible to use a prior STEM degree to qualify for their second STEM-OPT extension.

### **Which programs qualify for STEM-OPT at Sofia University?**

To qualify for the STEM OPT extension, an F-1 student must hold a bachelor's degree or a higher degree in an eligible STEM field from a SEVP-certified school that is accredited (by an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education) at the time the student submits their STEM OPT extension application to USCIS.

### **Eligible programs at Sofia University:**

Master of Science in Computer Science (MSCS) - 11.0701

Master of Business Administration and Management – Data Analytics (MBA-Data Analytics) – 52.1399

### **STEM OPT Employer**

In order to receive the STEM-OPT extension, a student must pursue their practical training through an employer that is enrolled in USCIS' E-Verify employment eligibility verification program.

Additionally, STEM-OPT extension applicants must select employers that can guarantee the student will complete a minimum of 20 hours of work per week and provide the student with formal training and learning objectives.

The student must work with their potential STEM-OPT extension employer to complete the Form I-983, which must include how the training opportunity has a direct relationship to the student's qualifying STEM degree. Visit the Students and the Form I-983 page to learn how to properly complete and submit the Form I-983.

F-1 students cannot qualify for STEM-OPT extensions unless they will be bona fide employees of the employer signing the Form I-983 because F-1 students may not provide the employer attestation (i.e., signatures) on their own behalf. The employer that signs the Form I-983 must be the same entity that employs the student and provides the practical training experience.

Please note: A student's post-completion OPT employer does not need to be the same as the student's STEM-OPT extension employer.

Additional resources:

- [DSOs: Recommending Students for the STEM OPT Extension](#)
- [Students: Determining STEM OPT Extension Eligibility](#)
- [Form I-983 Overview](#)
- [Students and the Form I-983](#)
- [Employers and the Form I-983](#)
- [STEM OPT Extension Overview](#)
- [STEM OPT Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Fair Labor Standards Act \(FLSA\)](#)
- [Form I-765](#)
- [USCIS Case Status](#)
- [Post-completion OPT](#)
- [DAPIP](#)
- [E-Verify Employment Eligibility](#)

### **Students in 60-Day Grace Period:**

Students *may not* apply for STEM OPT extensions during the 60-day grace period following an initial (usually 12-month) period of post-completion OPT.