Valparaiso University Office of International Programs

STEM OPT EXTENSION

Eligibility Requirements:

To be eligible for the 24-month STEM OPT extension, you must:

- Be in valid F-1 status participating in OPT, working for a U.S. employer in a job directly related your major field of study.
- Have earned a STEM field specified by [Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).](#)
- Have a job offer of paid employment from an employer registered in the E-Verify employment verification system program. Such employer agrees to report your departure or termination of employment.
- The position must not violate any labor laws. The work must be at least 20 hours per week and the student must be able to provide evidence acquired from the student's employer to verify that the student worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of employment.
- Not have accrued more than 90 days of unemployment during OPT.
- Have not previously received more than one STEM OPT extension (regardless of degree level).
- Fill out [Form I-983](#) in coordination with your employer.
- Agree to make reports to the OIP within 10 days of any change in employment status regarding your employment, or every 6 months if no change has occurred. Changes must be reflected on a new Form I-983.
  - While on STEM OPT, you are still expected to update your residential address and other biographical information through the SEVP Portal. However, employment updates must be made to the OIP through the STEM OPT Reporting e-form on [iValpo](#).

When to Apply:

USCIS must receive your application for the extension **BEFORE** your OPT expires, but no more than 90 days before it expires, and no more than 60 days after the I-20 requesting STEM OPT was printed

Most students apply for STEM OPT through iValpo 30 to 60 days before their OPT expires. That gives enough time for the OIP to process the request, the student to collect the STEM OPT I-20, and then for the final application to be received by USCIS before their OPT expires.

How to Apply:

1. Log on to iVALPO using your regular VU username and password.

2. Find the STEM OPT I-20 Application e-form under F-1 Practical Training.

3. Complete the e-form, and allow 7 business days for processing. You will receive an email upon e-form approval directing you in the next steps of final application for STEM OPT to USCIS.

Please Take Note:

* question #27 on pg 3 of the I-765 should be filled with (c) (3) (c)

* question #28 on pg 3 of the I-765 should include your degree as listed on your I-20, employer's name and E-verify number.

* don't forget to include a copy of your EAD card(s).

* you must also include copy of your most recent diplomas from a STEM field degree..

Once you have applied for the STEM extension:

You will be able to continue employment while the extension application is pending, for up to 180 days, or until you have received notification of a decision on your application from USCIS.

The maximum days of unemployment during the 36 months of OPT (12 months of standard OPT + 24 months of STEM extension) is 150 days, **INCLUDING** days accrued during standard OPT.

Any employment during the 24 month STEM extension period must be with an employer registered in the E-Verify program.

All employment during the STEM extension must be paid employment. Volunteer work is allowed but does not count as employment for the purpose of maintaining F-1 status.

All the reporting, travel, and post-OPT issues remain the same as for standard OPT. Please refer to the standard OPT information here.