UMBC
CENTER FOR GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

STEM Optional Practical Training (STEM OPT)

Students who have graduated from UMBC with a DHS-designated STEM degree can extend their initial year of OPT (Optional Practical Training) via the STEM OPT Extension.

Eligibility

Students must have active F-1 status, be currently in regular OPT, and have completed a STEM-eligible degree. Also, students must be pursuing work for an E-Verified employer, and not have previously received OPT/STEM OPT at their current level of study.

Application Process

First, review the steps on our website. Students must obtain a STEM OPT I-20 from the ISSS office before applying to USCIS. Applications without this specific I-20 will be denied. After obtaining the I-20, students submit an online application to USCIS.

Deadlines

STEM OPT applications must be submitted to USCIS no earlier than 90 days before your OPT end date and no later than your OPT end date. STEM OPT applications submitted to USCIS outside of this date range will be denied. Work with the ISSS office to prepare your application early.

FAQs

Do I need a job offer before applying for STEM OPT?

- Yes, you need to complete the I-983 form with your employer. This is to show proof that there is a bona-fide employer employee relationship.

Does it need to be related to my major?

- Yes - the position must be related to your program major.

Does my employer need to be e-verified?

- Yes - please check with your employer to see if they participate in the E-verify program. This is required for STEM OPT.

REMEMBER:
You must receive a STEM OPT I-20 before you submit your application to USCIS!

Ready to apply?

isss-portal.umbc.edu

Questions?
isss.umbc.edu/contact

Hours:
Mon - Fri, 8:30am to 4:30pm
UC207 A

STEM OPT Checklist

This is a checklist of items F-1 students must upload all required documentation and submit their I-765 application using the **USCIS online application system**. The online application system guides you on what documents you will need:

☐ **Recent 2 x 2 passport photo**

☐ **Recent I-94 record**

☐ **STEM OPT I-20 with signatures**
- Sign your name with blue ink on first page
- Check if there is an STEM OPT Recommendation on the second page. It should list "STEM OPT Requested" and the requested start and end dates.

☐ **Copy of passport biographical page(s)**

☐ **Copy of any previous EAD cards (if applicable)**

☐ **Proof of degree (official transcript or copy of diploma)**
- PhD students must submit an official transcript and not a diploma

☐ **Proof of institutional accreditation***
***ONLY** if applying with previously earned STEM degree from another school

☐ **USCIS Filing Fee**
- Do **NOT** submit until you review and double check your application!

All application materials must fit USCIS online application's size requirements. Please make sure all documents are clear and legible.

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