CARROLL UNIVERSITY
Office of
International Education

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international@carrollu.edu | www.carrollu.edu/international

STEM OPT Information and Extension Request Form

Revised: June 11, 2017

Students who complete a degree in specific fields related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) may be eligible to apply for an additional 24 months of Optional Practical Training (OPT). Students are limited to one STEM extension per level of study, but may be eligible for a second STEM extension after completing an additional STEM degree at a higher level. Not all STEM fields are designated for this extension. The list of eligible STEM fields is available on the Department of Homeland Security website. More details about the STEM extension are explained at: https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub.

What are the requirements for STEM OPT?

To be eligible for STEM OPT, the student must:

- Be in a valid period of post-completion OPT authorization.
- Have earned a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree in a designated STEM field. (To determine if your major is a STEM designated field, refer to the primary major listed on your Form I-20.)
- Under certain circumstances, a student may use a prior STEM degree to be eligible for a STEM extension. This means a degree earned before your most recent Carroll degree. To use a prior degree, the student must:
  - Have received their most recent degree from an accredited U.S. university
  - Have received their prior, qualifying STEM degree (at the bachelor's level or higher) within 10 years of applying for the STEM OPT extension
  - Have not used the prior STEM degree as the basis for a previous STEM extension
- Work for an employer that must:
  - Be registered in the E-Verify Program
  - Work with the student to complete the Form I-983 Training Plan and sign the I-983 to certify it is true and correct
  - Agree to review the student's annual self-evaluation and report the termination or departure of an OPT employee to the DSO at the student's school if the termination is prior to the end of the OPT period.

Please note that unpaid positions, self-employment, and working for a staffing company or temporary agency generally do not qualify as employment for a STEM extension.

What is the authorization timeline for a STEM OPT application?

The STEM OPT application must be properly filed with the appropriate USCIS Service Center before the end of the student's post-completion OPT authorization and within 60 days of the date the STEM recommendation is entered in SEVIS by the International Student Advisor in the Office of International Education at Carroll University. The USCIS Service Center can take 90 days to process the STEM OPT application, so plan ahead. However, if a student's post-completion OPT expires while the STEM extension application is pending s/he can continue employment while waiting for the new EAD.

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Application Process for STEM OPT

Read the information on the prior page. Be sure you understand the information related to timing and eligibility for STEM OPT.

Step 1: Complete the *STEM OPT Extension Request Form* (see page 6)
Step 2: Complete the Form I-983 Training Plan with the help of your employer

- You can find a tutorial about completing the Form at: https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/form-i-983-overview

Step 3: Complete Form I-765

- Download the form at www.uscis.gov/I-765 and read detailed instructions at http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765instr.pdf
- Tips for completing Form I-765
    - Question #10: This is the 11-digit number on the top of your I-94 card or printed I-94 verification
    - Questions #12-15: Refer to your Form I-94 Arrival Record
    - Question #16: use (c)(3)(C) for a 24-month STEM OPT extension
    - Question #17: List your degree and major: For example, M.S. – Software Engineering or B.S. – Computer Science.
    - Be sure to sign your name within the space provided by the signature block

Step 4: Gather the following documents, which are required for your application:

- *STEM OPT Extension Request Form* (see page 6)
- Completed I-983 Form signed by you and your employer. This form will be reviewed and retained by OIE.
- Completed I-765 Form
- 2 passport size photos (see page 8 of I-765 instruction for details). Write your name and I-94 number in pencil on the back of each photo.
- 2 copies of your passport information page (including name, date of birth, issue and expiration date)
- 2 copies of your I-94 card (front and back) or printed I-94 verification
- 2 copies of all previous I-20 forms
- 2 copies of any previously issued EAD cards (front and back)
- Copy of your Carroll University diploma showing your earned degree
- Form G-1145 for e-notification acceptance of application (MUST be typed) – download at www.uscis.gov
- $410 fee in the form of a personal check or money order made payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security"

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Step 5:
Please mail the items listed above to your International Student Advisor at the mailing address listed at the top of this form. Your advisor will check the documents, make needed entries in SEVIS and issue a Form I-20 for your STEM OPT application. She will return the assembled STEM OPT application to you, with instructions, so you can complete and mail it to the appropriate USCIS Service Center. Alternatively, you may make an appointment for an in-person meeting with the International Student Advisor if you are in the nearby area.

Step 6:
Make a copy of your complete application for your records, follow the mailing instructions at https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses and mail your STEM OPT application along with the items below to the appropriate USCIS center. Remember to send your application within 60 days following the issuance of the new I-20 but before the completion date of your currently authorized OPT period. Please note that you <u>do not</u> send Form I-983 to USCIS with your application. It is retained by OIE.

A complete STEM OPT application includes the following:

- New I-20 form with STEM OPT endorsement and your signature on page one
- Completed I-765 Form
- 2 passport size photos (see page 8 of I-765 instruction for details). Write your name and I-94 number in pencil on the back of each photo.
- 1 copy of your passport information page (including name, date of birth, issue and expiration date)
- 1 copy of your I-94 card (front and back) or printed I-94 verification
- 1 copy of all previous I-20 forms
- 1 copy of any previously issued EAD cards (front and back)
- Copy of your Carroll diploma showing your earned degree
- Form G-1145 for e-notification acceptance of application (MUST be typed) – download at www.uscis.gov
- $410 fee in the form of a personal check or money order made payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security"

 If you reside in Wisconsin, mail your application documents to the USCIS Phoenix Lockbox:

For US postal service:
USCIS
P.O. Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

For Courier:
USCIS
Attn: AOS
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S, Ste. 100
Phoenix, AZ 85034

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Waiting for authorization

About 10 to 14 days after you submit your application for STEM OPT to USCIS, you should receive a receipt notice by postal mail. This notice will include a Receipt Number which you can use to check the status of your application on the USCIS website at: www.uscis.gov. Look for "Case Status" on the website home page.

Once you are approved for STEM OPT by USCIS you will receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD card). The EAD card is proof of employment authorization during the dates listed on the card. Please provide OIE with a copy of your EAD card once you receive it.

Reporting Requirements during STEM OPT

Because your F-1 status continues during STEM OPT, you are required by law to report changes to certain information within 10 days. You can report these changes using the *OPT Verification Form* so the International Student Advisor can record them in SEVIS. These changes include:
- Residence or mailing address in the United States
- Legal name
- United States legal status (i.e. inform us if you change your status to H1-B, J-1, H-4, etc.)
- Employer name or worksite address
- Changes to your I-983 Training Plan (such as job title, company name, responsibilities, supervisor name, worksite address). Please send a new Form I-983 signed by you and your employer
- Information about any disruption of your employment such as job termination

6-month reporting
Every six (6) months from the start date of your STEM OPT authorization, you must complete an *OPT Verification Form* about your employment. Reporting is necessary even if nothing has changed with your employer. OIE will reach out to you to provide a reminder prior to the 6 month date, but it is your responsibility to submit this form in a timely way. Please make sure that you provide your current email address to OIE so that they can easily contact you.

12-month evaluations
While on approved STEM OPT, you must write an annual self-evaluation and must report to the International Student Advisor about the progress of your training experience. Complete the evaluation section of Form I-983 (page 6 or 7) and send an electronic copy to OIE, who will include it with your record.

Periods of Unemployment during STEM OPT
During STEM OPT maintaining your F–1 status is dependent upon employment. You may not accrue an aggregate of more than 150 days of unemployment during the total OPT period comprising your initial post-completion OPT and the subsequent 24-month STEM extension. Each day during the authorized OPT period that you do not have qualifying employment counts as a day of unemployment.

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At THE END of your STEM OPT

Your practical training is automatically terminated if you transfer to another school or begin studies at another educational level at Carroll.

If you decide to leave the United States before the authorized OPT ending date on your EAD and do not plan to return to the U.S., please contact the International Student Advisor at Carroll with information about your date of departure.

After the ending date of your STEM OPT, you may remain in the U.S. for an additional 60 days. During this "grace period" you may transfer to another academic program, change to another visa status, or prepare to depart from the U.S. You may not be employed during this period.

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STEM OPT Extension Request Form

Revised: March 2017

Students who complete a degree in specific fields, designated by the U.S. government, related to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) may be eligible to apply for an additional 24 months of Optional Practical Training (OPT). Not all STEM fields are designated for this extension.

To be eligible for STEM extension, the student must:

- Be in a valid period of post-completion OPT which is based on an earned degree in a designated STEM field.
  - (To determine if your major is a STEM designated field, refer to the major listed on your Form I-20 and the government designated list at www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf)
- Not have received a previous STEM OPT approval; and
- Work for an employer that must: 1) be registered in the E-Verify Program; 2) work with the student to complete the Form I-983 Training Plan and sign the I-983 to certify it is true and correct; and 3) Agree to review the student's annual self-evaluation and report the termination or departure of an OPT employee to the DSO at the student's school if the termination is prior to the end of the OPT period.

Please complete this form and return it to the International Student Advisor at Carroll University along with the other necessary materials for your STEM extension application.

To Be Completed By Student

Name:_____   CU ID:_____

Phone: _____   Email:_____

Current mailing address:_____

City:_____ State:_____ Zip Code:_____

OIE will return your OPT STEM Extension application materials with the new Form I-20 by postal mail to this address unless you request other arrangements. It is your responsibility to submit your completed application to the appropriate USCIS Service Center.

Current Post Completion OPT employment ending date: _____

Current employer/company name:_____

Worksite address:_____

Job title or position:_____ Supervisor's Name:_____

How is this employment related to your field of study at Carroll?_____
_____
_____

Supervisor's phone: _____Supervisor's Email: _____

Student's Signature: _____ Date: _____ (MM/DD/YYYY)