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# DHS Further Expands the STEM OPT Designated Degree Program List

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Practices: Immigration

On January 20, 2021, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced it is adding 22 qualifying fields of study to the STEM OPT Designated Degree Program list. The notice will be published in the Federal Register and becomes effective immediately. This is good news as it will make the STEM optional practical training (OPT) more widely available.

The STEM OPT Designated Degree Program list is used to determine whether a degree obtained by certain F-1 nonimmigrant students qualifies as a science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) degree for the F-1 student to be eligible to apply for a 24-month extension of their post-completion OPT employment authorization.

OPT is one type of work authorization available to certain F-1 nonimmigrant students, allowing them to apply for employment authorization for up to 12 months so they can obtain real-world work experience directly related to their studies. The STEM OPT is a 24-month extension of OPT and is available to students who have completed 12 months of OPT, have received a degree in an approved STEM field and who are employed by an E-Verify company.

The current list of approved STEM fields was established in connection with a Final Rule issued in 2016 and was last updated in 2020. Pursuant to the 2016 rule, DHS continues to accept for consideration suggested additions or deletions from the list. Based on the 97 suggestions received from the public, DHS has decided to add 22 new fields of study to the list.

These new fields include Bioenergy, Forestry, Forest Resources Production and Management, Human-Centered Technology Design, Cloud Computing, Anthrozoology, Climate Science, Earth Systems Science, Economics and Computer Science, Environmental Geosciences, Geobiology, Geography and Environmental Studies, Mathematical Economics, Mathematics and Atmospheric/Oceanic Science, Data Science General, Data Analytics (general and other), Business Analytics, Data Visualization, Financial Analytics, Industrial and Organizational Psychology, and Social Sciences, Research Methodology and Quantitative Methods. The complete list can be found here.