

STEM POLICIES

Students graduating from programs designated by Columbia University as STEM fields are eligible to apply for an Optional Practical Training (OPT) extension. These designations are based on the University's assessment of whether a program's curriculum aligns with the criteria for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields as defined by the [Classification of Instructional Programs \(CIP\) codes](#).

However, applying for an OPT extension does not guarantee eligibility. The final determination of whether a student's field of study qualifies as STEM, as well as the approval or denial of an OPT extension application, is made exclusively by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

STEM-Designated Programs at SIPA:

- **Master of Public Administration (MPA)** – Effective for students entering the program in Fall 2025 and beyond, classified under Management Sciences and Quantitative Methods, Other (CIP Code: 52.1399).
- **MPA in Economic Policy Management (MPA-EPM)** – Classified under Econometrics and Quantitative Economics (45.0603).
- **MPA in Development Practice (MPA-DP)** – Classified under Sustainability Studies (30.3301).
- **MPA in Environmental Science & Policy (MPA-ESP)** – Classified under Environmental Studies (03.0103).

Important Note: The MPA designation as a STEM field applies only to students who enter the program beginning in Fall 2025 (Academic Year 2025-2026). This designation is not retroactive and does not automatically apply to students who entered the MPA program before Fall 2025.

However, current students may request to transition into the new STEM-designated MPA curriculum, provided they meet the eligibility requirements and complete the revised program requirements. Requests will be reviewed case-by-case; approval is subject to program regulations and academic standing. Students interested in this option should consult with their academic advisor to determine the implications for their degree progression and graduation timeline.

Previously Recognized STEM-Designated Programs at SIPA:

These programs are no longer accepting new students, but students already enrolled in these programs are eligible for the STEM designation:

- Combined curriculum of the International Finance & Economic Policy Concentration and the Data Analytics & Quantitative Analysis Specialization – applicable to both the MIA and MPA degree programs, under Econometrics and Quantitative Economics (45.0603).
- Combined curriculum of the Climate, Energy, and Environment Concentration (CEE) and the Data Analytics and Quantitative Analysis Specialization (DAQA) – applicable to both the MIA and MPA degree programs, under Environmental Studies (03.0103).
- Combined curriculum of the Economic and Political Development Concentration (EPD) and the Data Analytics and Quantitative Analysis

Specialization (DAQA) – applicable to both the MIA and MPA degree programs, under Sustainability Studies (30.3301).

Special considerations for combined curricula:

- The core requirements of the MIA or MPA degrees do not include specific stipulations for graduating with a STEM-designated degree under the IFEP/DAQA, E&E/DAQA, or EPD/DAQA combinations. All students who complete these combinations, irrespective of their focus area, will receive a STEM-designated degree.
- IFEP, E&E, and EPD students cannot count DAQA specialization courses as part of their Concentration requirements. IFEP-Economic Policy/DAQA students must fulfill specific IFEP requirements and achieve nine (9) credits from DAQA's focus areas—Quantitative Analysis or Computational and Data Analysis.
- Per DAQA policy, students who pass the SIPA U6501 proficiency examination must take a substitute DAQA course, completing nine credits in the specialization.

No additional programs or combinations have been authorized as STEM-designated at this time. New full-time SIPA students may enroll in any of these accredited STEM programs, adhering to the standard program requirements without further STEM-specific prerequisites.

Additional Resources

- [Visit Columbia's International Students & Scholars Office site for resources on STEM OPT Extension.](#)