Optional Practical Training
17 month STEM extension application

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OPT STEM Extension for F-1 Students

In 2008 the U.S. Department of Homeland Security created a new policy extending the period of OPT eligibility for certain qualified F-1 students from 12 to 29 months.

Who is Eligible?
✓ The student must be a recipient of a U.S. bachelor’s, master’s, or doctoral degree in specific majors in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM.) (For a list of government approved STEM degrees, click here. A degree minor in a STEM field does not qualify for the extension.
✓ The extension must be based on the same degree as the post-completion OPT, not on a previous degree.
✓ The student must be authorized for OPT at the time of the extension application and have a job or job offer related to his or her field of study.
✓ At the time of application for the OPT extension, the student’s employer must be registered with and participating in the USCIS E-Verify employment verification program.
✓ The student must not have exceeded 90 days of unemployment in the initial 12-month period of OPT.
✓ The student cannot be granted the STEM extension more than once. Only one extension per lifetime is allowed.

When to Apply?
You may apply within 120 days of the end date of your 12-month OPT period and your OPT extension application must reach USCIS before your current OPT ends. Your OPT extension start date will automatically be the day after the expiration of your current 12-month OPT EAD. The end date of your extension will be 17 months later.

How to Apply
Step 1: Request OPT Extension I-20
Please submit the following documents to International Affairs to receive a new SEVIS I-20:

☑ OPT Extension Request Form
☑ Photocopy of STEM degree diploma
☑ I-765
☑ Current OPT I-20
☑ Photocopy of EAD

Step 2: Mail the following documents to:
Standard Mail: USCIS Phoenix Lockbox, PO Box 21281, Phoenix, AZ 85036
Express: USCIS, Attn: AOS, 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S, Suite 100, Phoenix, AZ 85034)

☑ Photocopy of new OPT Extension I-20 and previous OPT I-20
☑ Form I-765
☑ Photocopy of passport identification page
☑ Photocopy of F1 visa page (even if expired)
☑ Photocopy of I-94 card (both sides) or printout from https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov
☑ 2 passport-sized photos taken within last 30 days (name and Sevis ID written on back)
☑ Photocopy of current 12-month EAD
☑ Photocopy of STEM degree diploma
☑ Check or money order for $380, payable to Department of Homeland Security
Note: Your OPT extension application must be sent to USCIS no later than 30 days after the date of I-20 issuance. If your I-20 is more than 30 days old by the time you plan to mail it to USCIS, see an International Student Advisor in International Affairs.

Instructions for Completing Form I-765

✓ Download I-765

Check box “Renewal of my permission to accept employment.”

#1 Name: Write your family name only in CAPS. Example: SMITH Jane

#3 Return Address: You can either use your home address, or if you plan to move after you mail your application, use a reliable friend of family member’s address to receive your new EAD. In this case, you will need to use the notation “C/O” which means “in care of.” Example: Chen C/O Jane Smith, Street Address, City, OR.

#10 Alien Registration Number of I-94 Number: You should write your I-94 number found on the I-94 card that you received when you last entered the U.S. (white card stapled into your passport.) If you did not receive a card when you last entered the U.S., you may retrieve the I-94 number at https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov

#11 Previous employment authorization: Because you are applying for a 17-month extension, please answer “yes” and complete the related information for your current 12-month OPT period. A photocopy of your 12-month OPT EAD must be included with your application.

#12 Date of last entry: you can find this date stamped on your I-94 card or on your passport.

#13 Place of last entry: you can find the last port of entry stamped on your I-94 card or on your passport.

#14 Manner of last entry: this refers to your visa status the last time you entered the U.S. For example, “F-1 student.”

#15 Current immigration status: you should write F-1 student. If you believe your visa status is other than F-1, please talk to an international student advisor in International Affairs.

#16 Eligibility categories: for the 17-month extension, write (c) (3) (C).

#17 Degree/E-Verify: fill in all blanks in this section.
  • Degree: indicate here the SEVIS degree name as it appears on your I-20. Also include the “CIP” code found next to your degree name on page 3 of your I-20.
  • Employer’s Name as listed in E-Verify: Your employer should be able to provide you with this information.
  • Employer’s E-Verify Company Identification Number: Your employer should be able to provide you with this information.

Certification: remember to sign, date and list a home or cell phone number.

E-Notification
You may choose to receive an email and/or text message notifying you that your application has been accepted. You must complete Form G-1145, E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance, and clip it to the first page of your application. To download a copy of Form G-1145, click on the link www.uscis.gov “FORMS.”
Regulations to Maintain F-1 Status

General
✓ You must work in a position for an E-Verify employer at least 20 hours per week.
Link: E-Verify (http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis)
✓ You must work in a position related to your STEM degree.
✓ You must submit periodic updates to International Affairs.

Unemployment Allowance
Students who receive a 17-month OPT extension are given an additional 30 days of unemployment for a total of 120 days over their entire post-completion OPT period. Each day you are not working (other than weekends and holidays) during your OPT period counts as a day of unemployment. The only exceptions are periods of up to 10 days between the end of one job and the beginning of the next job.

Student Reporting Requirements
You must report any changes to the information listed below within 10 working days to the Office of International Affairs using the OPT Update Form, which is online.

OPT Update Form: http://international.uoregon.edu/isss/opt/updateform

6-Month Validation Report
You must submit a validation report to the Office of International Affairs, using the OPT Update Form, every six (6) months starting from the date the extension starts and ending when your F-1 status ends or the OPT extension ends, whichever is first. Failure to submit the validation report will result in the termination of your F-1 status.

Employer’s Reporting Requirement
When your employment is terminated for any reason, the employer is required to provide the following information to OIA. You must inform your employer of the reporting requirement at the end of your employment. Ask your employer to email OIA at sevis@uoregon.edu with the following text in the subject line: “OPT Employment Termination.” The information below must be included in the email message:

• Student employee’s name
• SEVIS ID number (provided by the student)
• Start and end dates of employment

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the STEM fields?
Actuarial Science, Computer Science Applications, Engineering, Engineering Technologies, Biological and Biomedical Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics, Military Technologies, Physical Sciences, Science Technologies, Medical Scientist (MS, PhD). The complete STEM degree list is posted at http://www.ice.gov/sevis/stemlist.htm

When does the OPT extension start?
If the student has properly filed the I-765 application for employment, the OPT extension period starts the day after the expiration of the student’s current 12-month period of OPT.

Can I work with an expired EAD while my OPT extension is pending?
Yes. Your work authorization is automatically extended for up to 180 days while your OPT extension application is pending.
What types of employment are allowed during an OPT extension?

- **Single employer**: Students may work for a single employer. The employment must be related to the student’s STEM degree and the company must be enrolled in E-Verify.

- **Multiple employers**: Students may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to the student’s degree program and all employers must be enrolled in E-Verify.

- **Self-employed business owner**: Students may start a business and be self-employed. In this situation, the student must work full-time. The student must be able to prove that he or she has the proper business licenses and is actively engaged in a business related to the student’s degree program. The company must enrolled in E-Verify.

- **Does unpaid experience count as employment during an OPT extension?**
  Yes. As of 2010, unpaid employment is allowed.

What is E-Verify and how do employers enroll?
E-Verify is an internet-based system operated by USCIS in partnership with the Social Security Administration. E-Verify is free to employers and is available in all 50 states. E-Verify provides an automated link to federal databases to help employers determine employment eligibility of new hires and the validity of their social security numbers. Employers must enroll in E-Verify and provide you with an E-Verify company identification number for the I-765. Enrollment procedures are available at [http://www.uscis.gov/everify](http://www.uscis.gov/everify).

How many hours must I work while on OPT extension?
Students granted an OPT extension must work at least 20 hours per week for an E-Verify-enrolled employer in a position directly related to the student’s STEM degree. STEM students may work multiple jobs related to their STEM degree, but all the employers must be enrolled in E-Verify.

How do I show that my employment is directly related to my degree program?
Students should maintain evidence – for each job – of the position held, proof of the duration of that position, the job title, contact information for the student’s supervisor or manager, and a description of the work. If it is not clear from the job description how the work is related to the student’s degree, the student should obtain a signed letter from the employer’s hiring official, supervisor, or manager stating how the student’s degree is related to the work performed.

Can I travel outside the U.S. if my current EAD has expired and my OPT extension is pending?
No. You must wait to receive the new extension EAD.

What is the effect on a student’s status if the student exceeds the period of unemployment or non-activity?
To avoid violating status, prior to reaching the limit on authorized unemployment, you should prepare to transfer to another school, change education level, depart the U.S., or take action to otherwise maintain your status in the U.S.

Who do I talk to if I have questions?
You can talk to an international student advisor in the Office of International Affairs. Please call 541-346-3206 to schedule an appointment to meet with or talk to an advisor. You can also attend an OPT workshop. Dates are listed on the International Affairs webpage.