



Optional Practical Training 17-Month STEM Extension

On April- 2008, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) published new federal regulations governing Optional Practical Training (OPT). These regulations allow for a 17-month extension of post-completion Optional Practical Training (for a total period of 29 months) **provided that certain conditions are met.**

- 1- The student must be currently authorized for a 12-month period of post-completion OPT and working for a U.S. employer in a job that is directly related to the student's field of study (major)
- 2- The student must have successfully completed a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree in a field on the DHS STEM Designated Degree Program list (**Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics**)
- 3- At the time of application for the 17-month extension, the student must have a job-offer or be employed by an employer registered with the "E-Verify" federal employment verification system. For more information on "E-Verify," see the "E-Verify" section below. STEM students may work multiple jobs, but all the employers must be enrolled in E-Verify.
- 4- The student must not have previously received a 17-month OPT extension after earning a STEM degree.
- 5- The student must apply for the 17-month extension through the ISS office and ISS must will recommend the extension and issue a new I-20 to reflect the recommendation
- 6- In order for students to apply, they must complete form I-765 with a check or money order of \$340 payable to the **U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security**
- 7- The student must file the extension application 3 months BEFORE the current period of OPT expires
- 8- A student who files the application timely whose current EAD card expires while the application is pending may continue employment while the STEM extension application is pending until a final decision is made, or for 180 days, whichever comes first

STEM Information

Your most recent degree must be in a field of study that is on the Federal Government's approved list of STEM Fields (**S = Science T = Technology E = Engineering M = Mathematics**)

In order for F-1 students to qualify for this 17-month extension, the major (code for the student's degree) program must be on the DHS list. To view the DHS detailed list of all STEM fields approved by the federal government, please visit: <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/stemlist.htm>

Post-Completion OPT is Now Dependent on Employment (*Very Important*)

Students granted a 17-month OPT extension may NOT accrue an aggregate of more than 120 days of unemployment during the total 29-month OPT period, effective April 8, 2008. Any periods of unemployment before the effective date of April 8, 2008 do not apply. More than 120 days of unemployment after April 8, 2008 may affect eligibility for future U.S. immigration benefits. The application could be denied because of the unemployment.

Reporting Requirements (*Very Important*)

As IPFW continues to maintain students' SEVIS records for the full period of OPT including extensions, students **MUST REPORT EVERY SIX MONTHS** the following information to the Office of International Student Services within ten days of the change:

- Change of name
- Change of residential or mailing address
- Name and address of employer
- Change in the name or address of employer
- When employment changes or terminates

The employer must agree to report the termination or departure of the student to the Office of International Student Services at IPFW.

E-Verify

E-Verify is an Internet-based system operated by the Department of Homeland Security in partnership with the Social Security Administration. E-Verify allows employers to electronically verify the employment eligibility of their newly hired employees. An F-1 student applying for an OPT 17-month STEM extension can only do so if at the time of filing, the student is employed by, or has a job offer with, an E-Verify participating employer. The employer must provide the student with the company's E verify name and company I.D. number, which are required on the I-765 Application for Employment Authorization.

For more information on E-Verify, visit: http://www.dhs.gov/ximgtn/programs/gc_1185221678150.shtm

Expiration of Current EAD Card While 17-Month STEM Extension Application is Pending

Provided that the student has submitted a timely and correctly filed application for a 17-Month STEM Extension to the USCIS, if the student has not received notice of the approval of the STEM extension application before the current EAD card's expiration date, the student's EAD card is extended automatically pursuant to the terms and conditions specified in 8 CFR 274a.12(b)(6)(iv). This means that the expired card will remain valid until USCIS makes a decision on the extension application or for a period not to exceed 180 days.

Travel While 17-Month STEM Extension Application is Pending and if Current EAD Card Has Expired

A student who has applied for a 17-month OPT STEM extension, whose current EAD card has expired, cannot travel outside the United States, even if employed, until the new EAD card is received.



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