



Optional Practical Training- STEM Extension

Revised 08/2011

F-1 students in post-completion Optional Practical Training who earned a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree in a science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) field as listed on the I-20 and the DHS STEM Designated Degree Program list and who work for an e-verify employer are able to apply for a 17 month extension of the post-completion OPT. The STEM Designated Degree Program list as of May 12, 2011 can be found at:

http://www.nafsa.org/uploadedFiles/SEVPandDHS_STEMprograms2011Lists.pdf

Eligibility

- Be in a period of approved post-completion OPT status
- Current OPT must be based on a degree in one of the STEM designated fields
- Must have received the degree upon which the current OPT was based
- Possess a valid passport
- Work for an employer who is registered in the E-Verify program
- Employer must agree to reporting requirements
- Must not be a previous recipient of STEM Extension OPT

Filing Deadline

STEM OPT petitions may be submitted **up to 90 days prior** to the end date on the current OPT card and **must be received by the USCIS Service Center prior to the current card end date.**

Employment Dates

Authorization begins the day after the first period of OPT and ends 17 months later. A student who submits the petition on time to USCIS may continue to work for 180 days beyond the expiration of the current OPT while the STEM extension is pending. The work must be for an e-verify employer.

Unemployment Limit

Post-completion OPT are limited to 90 days of unemployment beginning with the start date of the OPT card. Students with a STEM extension are granted an additional 30 days allowance for time spent unemployed. Unemployment is considered to be every day (including weekends and time spent out of the country) that the student does not have a qualifying work arrangement for OPT as described in the types of work appropriate for OPT section of this handout.

Student Reporting Responsibilities while on STEM OPT

Students with STEM OPT have two timelines for reporting responsibilities. Information should be sent to ipdept@olemiss.edu

1. Changes to the following must be reported within 10 days of the occurrence:
 - Any change in name
 - Residential address
 - Name and address of their employer
 - Any change to the name and address of the employer
 - Any interruption of such employment



2. Every 6 months (counted from the start of the STEM OPT), the student must report the name and address of their employer. This must happen even if there hasn't been any change to the data from the last report.

Employer Reporting Responsibilities

Employers must agree to within 48 hours of the occurrence, notify the Designated School Official using ipdept@olemiss.edu if the employee is terminated or departs from employment prior to the end date on the STEM extension EAD.

Cancellation of Optional Practical Training

If one decides to cancel OPT, it is sometimes possible to do so. Once the EAD has been processed by USCIS, OPT may **not** be cancelled if the start date on the EAD Card has already passed. To cancel OPT please contact the OIP advisor who assisted in filing your application.

Travel during STEM Optional Practical Training

Re-entry to the U.S. requires that F-1 students present the following documents:

- SEVIS Form I-20 endorsed for travel by F-1 advisor within the last six months;
- OPT Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card
- Valid F-1 visa; and
- Confirmation of employment from employer

Departure from the U.S. after Optional Practical Training

An F-1 student in OPT is allowed 60 days grace period after the authorization of employment ceases to change status, acquire an I-20 for a new academic program, or depart the United States.



STEM extension OPT Student Application Form

Family Name: _____ First Name: _____

ID Number: _____ Degree Level: _____

Major _____ Date of Degree Completion _____

Current EAD start date: _____ end date: _____

Signature _____ Date _____

When correspondence arrives concerning my OPT please contact me at:

- **Phone** _____
- **Permanent Email** _____

Required Documents to Accompany Application:

- Two passport-style photos
- Completed STEM Student Application Form and STEM OPT Agreement form
- Completed Form I-765 **use black ink** (attached or found at www.uscis.gov under Forms) In question 16, use code (c)(3)(C) for a STEM extension
- Copy of diploma
- Job offer letter, listing e-verify number
- Copy of current EAD card
- Photocopies of passport information page, most recent visa, and I-94 card (front and back)
- Employer Recommendation Form
- Check or money order for \$380 made payable to :
Department of Homeland Security

The International Student Advisor will review the materials and produce an I-20 with the OPT recommendation. You will be sent an email requesting that you come to sign the new I-20. If you are not in Oxford, the above documents can be scanned and sent for review. The original I-20 can be mailed to you and the petition can be sent by you or all documents can be sent to OIP for mailing. The petition and supporting materials which include a copy of the signed I-20 must be received by the USCIS Processing Center no later than 30 days after the date the I-20 was produced.



STEM OPT Agreement

I understand that I am responsible for the following should USCIS approve my post-completion OPT petition:

- Reporting to the Office of International Programs within 10 days of a change in:
 - My residential address
 - Name and address of my employer
 - Change to my employment status
- Reporting to the Office of International Programs, the name and address of my employer every 6 months even if there is no change to this information
- Pursuing work opportunities with an e-verify employer that are directly related to the program listed on my I-20
- Being aware of and not exceeding the unemployment limits (120 days)
- Keeping my passport valid six months into the future
- Requesting a signature on I-20 from OIP for out of country travel
- Complying with U.S. tax laws

I understand that:

- on-campus student employment positions are not appropriate while in post-completion OPT status
- if I am no longer enrolled and wish to continue health insurance coverage I may do so by completing the enrollment form and submitting payment directly to the company
- the issuance of a new I-20 for transfer to a new school or a new program of study will invalidate the OPT authorization when the SEVIS record for the new I-20 is changed to active status
- I have 60 days beyond the expiration of my OPT to either depart the U.S., transfer to a new school, have an I-20 issued for a new program or apply for a change to another immigration classification

Signature: _____

Print name: _____

Date: _____



Employer STEM OPT Recommendation Form

The student named below wishes to apply to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services for work authorization in the STEM Optional Practical Training category to continue or begin employment with your company. F-1 students in post-completion Optional Practical Training who earned a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree in a science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) field as listed on their I-20 document and the DHS STEM Designated Degree Program list and who work for an e-verify employer are able to apply for the 17 month extension of the post-completion OPT work authorization.

To be eligible for this type of work authorization, the employer must be registered in the E-verify program and agree to the employer reporting obligations.

Employer Reporting Responsibilities

Employers must agree to within 48 hours of the occurrence, notify the Designated School Official using ipdept@olemiss.edu if the employee is terminated or departs from employment prior to the end date on the STEM extension employment authorization document.

Employee Name: _____

Employer Name: _____

Address: _____

E-Verify number: _____

I support the STEM OPT extension request and agree to meet the employer reporting responsibilities for the above named person.

Employer signature: _____

Printed name: _____

Date: _____