

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

17 MONTH EXTENSION APPLICATION

FOR STUDENTS IN F-1 STATUS

ELIGIBILITY:

The 17 month OPT extension is available only to F-1 students currently authorized for and actively participating in an initial period of 12-month OPT who meet the following specific criteria:

1.) Student must be participating in OPT based on a Bachelors, Masters, or Doctorate earned (i.e. must have graduated) in one of the following STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math) areas. Only the most recent degree earned, for which the initial OPT was issued, is eligible for consideration. Prior degrees cannot be considered. Please note your degree must match the specific CIP Code listed below (the CIP Code will print on the last page of your I-20 if you have an I-20 updated after April 18, 2008). If your CIP Code does not match, OR if the CIP Code ends in the two digits "99" then you are not eligible for an OPT extension. This STEM Designated Degree Program List is issued and updated by the federal Department of Homeland Security; there is no flexibility to grant an OPT extension for a major that does not meet the CIP Code guidelines. The Office of International Programs will make the final determination of your CIP Code match when you apply for the extension. To view a more specific list go to <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/stemlist.htm>

- a. Actuarial Science: CIP Code 52.1304.
- b. Computer Science Applications: CIP Codes 11.xxxx, *except* 11.xx99 and 11.06xx Data Entry/Microcomputer Applications
- c. Engineering: CIP Codes 14.xxxx, *except* 14.xx99
- d. Engineering Technologies: CIP Codes 15.xxxx, *except* 15.xx99
- e. Biological and Biomedical Sciences: CIP Codes 26.xxxx, *except* 26.xx99
- f. Mathematics and Statistics: CIP Codes 27.xxxx, *except* 27.xx99
- g. Military Technologies: CIP Codes 29.xxxx, *except* 29.xx99
- h. Physical Sciences: CIP Codes 40.xxxx, *except* 40.xx99
- i. Science Technologies: CIP Codes 41.xxxx, *except* 41.xx99
- j. Medical Scientist (MS, PhD): CIP Code 51.1401

2.) Student must be employed with an employer who is enrolled in the E-Verify program. More details about the E-Verify program will be given later in this packet.

3.) Student has never received a 17-month OPT extension.

APPLICATION:

You must plan in advance and make an appointment with the international student adviser to complete the process. You are eligible to apply for a STEM extension 90 days before your OPT expires, and your application must arrive at USCIS before the end date on your EAD card. The following documents must be submitted prior the issuance of the SEVIS I-20 requesting the extension:

- 1.) I-765 form – www.uscis.gov
 - Enter the code of (c) (3) (c) in item #16 – designates application for a STEM-eligible extension
 - Enter the appropriate "CIP" code in item #17 that shows your degree is eligible for a STEM extension: <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/stemlist.htm>
- 2.) One sheet with your: job title, employer name, address and e-verify number; and your supervisor's name, email and phone number (attached to this application packet)
- 3.) Letter from your employer (on letterhead paper) stating how your employment relates to your degree.
- 4.) Copy of your NDSU diploma and/or copy of transcript showing your posted degree
- 5.) Copy of last form I-94 Departure Record (front and back)
- 6.) Copy of the photo and biography page of passport
- 7.) Copy of all previous and current EAD cards (front and back)
- 8.) Two photos (see attachment)
- 9.) \$340.00 check or money order payable to Department of Homeland Security.

Once all the above materials are submitted, an international student advisor will issue the I-20 requesting the OPT extension. This must be signed by the international student advisor and you and included with the application. Then, the application is submitted to USCIS Service Center in Lincoln, Nebraska and may take up to 90 days to process. You may continue to work for up to 180 days after the expiration of your initial OPT while your STEM extension is pending. USCIS should issue your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) to you directly. The EAD is your photo identification that lists the dates in which you are authorized to work.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO READ:

Reporting Information

While on OPT you are still legally required to report certain information to the Office of International Programs. Changes to any of the following must be reported **within 10 days** of the event.

- Changes in name or residential/ mailing address
- Report your employer name, address, and supervisor's email within 10 days of any changes or new employment
- Report changes to another immigration status
- If you will leave your OPT employment before your OPT end date
- Notify the OIP if your email address changes

Validation Reports to OIP Every 6 Months

Every six months, starting from the date your extension begins (i.e. the day after your current 12-month OPT ends) you are required by federal law to "check in" with the OIP. These check-ins will be done via email, at which time you will provide your legal name, current residential address, current email, your employer's name, employer's address, and whether or not you are still currently employed there. *The six month check-ins are in addition to reporting within 10 days any changes that occur, as detailed in the previous section. FAILURE TO COMPLETE THE 6 MONTH CHECK IN WILL RESULT IN AUTOMATIC TERMINATION OF YOUR OPT.*

When Should I Apply for the OPT Extension?

Apply for your OPT extension 90 days before your current OPT ends.

You will be eligible for one 17-month extension. The 17 months are automatic; the OIP has no way to shorten or lengthen the amount. Nor can you "save" any time to use for future OPT's.

What if I need to travel outside the U.S. while my OPT extension is pending?

Once you have applied for the OPT extension, you must remain inside the United States until you received the approval notice and EAD card. Departing the United States during a pending OPT extension that has been filed is likely to be seen as an abandonment of your application resulting in denial of the extension.

What is E-Verify?

E-Verify is a free and simple to use Web-based system that electronically verifies the employment eligibility of newly hired employees. E-Verify is a partnership between the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Social Security Administration (SSA). U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) oversees the program. E-Verify works by allowing participating employers to electronically compare employee information taken from the Form I-9 (the paper-based employee eligibility verification form used for all new hires) against more than 425 million records in SSA's database and more than 60 million records in DHS immigration databases. Results are returned in seconds.

How Can My Employer Sign Up?

Your employer should go to <http://www.uscis.gov/e-verify>

An employer's participation in E-Verify is voluntary and is currently free to employers. To participate, an employer must register online and accept the electronic **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** that details the responsibilities of SSA, DHS, and the employer.

Can I Still Get an Extension if My Employer Does Not Sign Up for E-Verify?

No. USCIS will not approve any extension applications where the employer is not participating in E-Verify.

What Other Responsibilities Does My Employer Have?

Federal law at 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(C)(4) requires employers to report the termination or departure of an OPT employee to the Designated School Official (DSO) at the school which helped the employee obtain OPT authorization. Such reporting must be made within 48 hours of the event. An employer shall consider a worker to have departed when the employer knows the student has left the employment OR if the student has not reported for work for a period of 5 consecutive business days without the consent of the employer, whichever occurs earlier.

Will I be eligible for another 17-month extension if I go back to school and get another degree?

No. The 17-month extension is available once per person, regardless of whether or not you go on to obtain a higher degree level and do another 12-month period of OPT.

Can I Change Employers Once I Apply for an Extension?

Once the extension is approved, you may change to work for another employer who is also enrolled in E-Verify. You must notify the OIP when this occurs. However, the OIP does not recommend you change employers while the extension is pending. You may not work for any employer during the extension period who is not enrolled in E-Verify. Please note: OPT employment must be related to the area in which you just obtained your most recent degree, i.e. in the area for which the OPT was authorized. Prior degrees in different areas, whether earned in the U.S. or abroad, cannot be used as the basis for OPT employment.

What Happens if I Become Unemployed While on OPT?

During post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment. Students may not accrue an aggregate of more than 90 cumulative days of unemployment during any post-completion OPT carried out under the initial 12-month post-completion OPT authorization. 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. If you are unemployed for more than the permitted lengths of time you must consider your OPT to be automatically cancelled and your F-1 status ended. *Note that volunteer positions do NOT qualify for the extension.*

OPT STEM EXTENSION
EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

Your name: _____

Job title: _____

Employer contact information:

Name of employer: _____

Address: _____

E-verify number: _____

*Also please put e-verify number in #17 on the I-765 form.

Your supervisor's contact information:

Supervisor's name: _____

E-mail address: _____

Phone number: _____

Your current address*: _____

***Note: When we create your new I-20 with a STEM Extension request, it will be mailed to this address for you to sign. Then, return this I-20 to the OIP. Please make sure your address is current. Thank you!**

Your work e-mail address: _____

Other e-mail address: _____