

# 17-MONTH STEM EXTENSION for OPT

## INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR QUALIFIED F-1 STUDENTS

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### DEFINITION

The STEM extension extends the previous 12-month OPT limit to 17 months (for a total eligibility of up to 29 months) for certain degree holders in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. The extension can only be granted in a 17 month period; the period cannot be “split” into multiple periods. The STEM Designated Degree Program List includes these *KU-offered* areas of study:

- Computer Science Applications
  - Engineering
  - Engineering Technologies
  - Biological and Biomedical Sciences (except Bachelor of Art in Human Biology)
  - Mathematics and Statistics
  - Physical Sciences
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### ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible, you must:

- currently be participating on an approved period of post-completion optional practical training (OPT) that has not expired and have completed your degree. Students on pre-completion OPT are not eligible for the extension.
  - work for a U.S. employer in a job directly related to your major area of study.
  - have successfully completed a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree in a field on the DHS STEM Designated Degree Program List.
  - have a job offer from an employer registered with the E-Verify employment verification system.
  - not have previously received a 17-month OPT extension after earning a STEM degree. There is a one-time limit of getting the 17-month extension, even if you get a second STEM degree.
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### WHEN TO APPLY

Applications for the 17-month STEM extension can be filed up to 120 days prior to the end of the regular period of post-completion OPT but USCIS must receive the application *before* the current OPT expires. USCIS recommends filing the application between the 120<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> day before OPT expires.

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### EMPLOYMENT SPECIFICS

Students:

- must work in a paid position at least 20 hours per week for an E-Verify employer in a position directly related to the student's STEM degree
- may work multiple jobs, but all employers must be enrolled in E-Verify.
- are allowed to volunteer, incidental to their status; however, volunteer work does not count as employment for the purpose of maintaining F-1 status (unlike during the initial 12 months of OPT when volunteer work does count as employment)

Sources: 8 CFR 214.2(f)(5)(vi), 8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(D), 8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(E), 8 CFR 214.2(f)(12)(i)

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## HOW TO APPLY

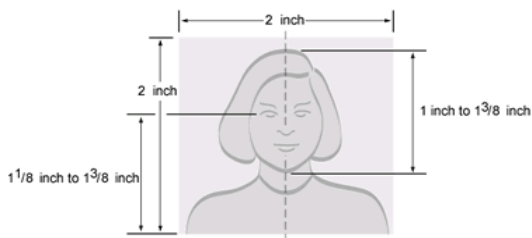
- A. Download and complete USCIS I-765 Application for Employment Authorization (<http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765.pdf>). ISSS advisors do not endorse the I-765 but can review it for completeness.
1. Enter the eligibility code: (c)(3)(C) for the 17-month STEM extension in Item 16 of the Form I-765.
  2. In Item 17, list the numerical CIP major code as shown at the top of page 3 of your I-20 (example: 27.0101), your employer's name as listed in E-Verify, and your employer's E-Verify Number (which is 5-6 digits – NOT the company's Tax ID#).
- B. Complete the Request for 17-Month STEM OPT Extension form.
- C. Complete and sign the attached Student's Reporting Responsibilities While on OPT Extension form.
- D. 1) Make an appointment and bring the following documents to ISSS, if you are still in the Lawrence area  
2) OR submit the following items by mail to:
- International Student & Scholars Services (OPT Extension)  
1450 Jayhawk Blvd, Room 2  
Lawrence, KS 66045
1. Original Request for 17-Month STEM OPT Extension Recommendation form.
  2. Original Student's Reporting Responsibilities While on STEM OPT Extension form.
  3. Photocopy of Form I-765 Application of Employment, marked with eligibility code (c)(3)(C).
  4. Photocopy of your current OPT Employment Authorization Document (EAD).
  5. Photocopy of your degree (official/unofficial transcript or diploma with stated program of study).
  6. Photocopy of passport page(s) showing your name, photo, and expiration.
  7. Photocopy of your I-94 card (front and back).
  8. Photocopy of visa (most recently used when last entering the U.S.).
- E. An ISSS advisor will review your request and determine your eligibility. If a STEM extension is warranted, an advisor will make his/her recommendation for an OPT extension in SEVIS which will generate a new I-20.
- 1) If extension requested through appointment, you will get an email when your new I-20 is ready for pickup. You will sign and date the new I-20 in the ISSS office. ISSS can make a photocopy of the I-20 to submit with your application.
  - 2) If extension requested by mail, a new I-20 will be mailed to you. Sign and date the new I-20. Then make two copies. Send one copy to ISSS and include the other copy with your OPT application materials.
- F. File the I-765 with the USCIS Service Center serving the area for your current residence, not necessarily where the first I-765 for regular OPT was filed. Submit the I-765 within 30 days of the issue date of the new I-20 AND before your current OPT expires. USCIS must receive the application before the current OPT expires. For further filing instructions and for Service Center mailing address please consult the "Instructions for Completing Form I-765" available at <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-765instr.pdf>.

*See next page for a list of materials to include with your application.*

**Don't forget to include the following in your mailing:**

1. \$340.00 application fee (check or money order made payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security).
2. 2 photographs, passport style (gently print name on back, & place in a clear plastic, Ziploc-style bag).
3. Original of Form I-765 Application for Employment.
4. Copy of EAD for current OPT.
5. Copy of new I-20 with recommendation for STEM OPT extension.
6. Copy of degree (e.g. official or unofficial transcript, or copy of diploma with program of study).
7. Copy of passport page(s) showing your name, photo, and expiration.
8. Copy of visa (most recently used)
9. Copy of I-94 card (front and back).
10. A statement from the employer regarding how the employment relates to the STEM field is optional.

ISSS recommends that you mail your application packet in a verifiable manner (such as certified with proof of delivery receipt). Be sure to keep all documents sent to and received from the USCIS Service Center.



**Photograph Requirements**

1. Frame subject with full face, front view, eyes open
2. Make sure photo presents full head from top of hair to bottom of chin; height of head should measure 1 inch to 1 3/8 inch (25 mm to 35mm)
3. Make sure eye level is between 1 1/8 inch to 1 3/8 inch (28 mm and 35 mm) from bottom of photo
4. Photograph subject against a plain white or off-white background.

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**POST FILING TIPS-WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW**

- ✓ Students who have properly filed Form I-765 (for STEM OPT extension) prior to the end date of his/her current post-completion OPT will be able to continue employment while their extension application is pending, until a final decision is made on the I-765 or for 180 days, whichever comes first.
- ✓ The employment authorization period for the 17-month STEM OPT extension begins on the day after the expiration of the initial post-completion OPT employment authorization, and ends 17 months later, regardless of the date the actual extension is approved.
- ✓ A student may change employers during the 17-month extension, however, the new employer must also be an E-Verify employer and the job must be directly related to the student's major. Students must report the change in employment to ISSS at : <http://www2.ku.edu/~issfacts/OPT>.
- ✓ Do not travel outside the United States if your EAD is expired and the STEM extension request is pending. Wait until you receive the new EAD.
- ✓ The student is expected to maintain evidence for each job showing that it is directly related to the major. Keep evidence of: 1) the position held, 2) proof of the duration of the position, 3) job title, 4) contact info of supervisor and 5) a description of the work. If it is not clear from the job description, get a signed letter from the hiring official, supervisor, or manager stating how the student's degree is related to the work performed.
- ✓ The employer must agree to report to ISSS any job termination or early departure. Please give the employer ISSS's handout about employer reporting responsibilities. The employer must consider a worker to have departed when the employer knows the student has left employment or if the student has not reported for work for a period of five consecutive business days without the employer's consent.
- ✓ Know and comply with your reporting responsibilities (see "Student Reporting Responsibilities" form)!

**Don't forget to provide ISSS with a copy of your new EAD card, issued for OPT extension!**

# STUDENT'S REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES

## while on 17-month *STEM OPT EXTENSION*

*While engaged in a period of approved 17-month Optional Practical Training (OPT extension), I acknowledge that I must comply with the following reporting requirements to maintain my F-1 status:*

- I will report to ISSS, within 10 days, of any changes to the following:
  - Legal name (as it occurs in my passport)
  - U.S. residential or mailing address
  - Employer name and address
  - Any loss or termination of employment
- I will make a validation report to ISSS every six months starting from the date the STEM extension starts (the day after my 12 month OPT expires) and ending when my F-1 status ends, or the STEM extension ends, whichever is first.
- I will report the above, required information directly to ISSS online at: <http://www2.ku.edu/~issfacts/OPT>. ISSS will in turn report my information to the Federal government. It is suggested you print a screen shot as confirmation of your compliance with the reporting requirements.

*Furthermore, I understand that:*

- I will provide ISSS a copy of the I-765 application receipt received from USCIS (Form I-797) as well as a copy of the EAD once the OPT is approved.
- I will give my employer the handout titled "Employer Responsibilities."
- Since F-1 status is dependent on employment, I may not accrue an aggregate of more than 120 days of unemployment during the total 29-month OPT period. The only exception is that periods of up to 10 days between the end of one job and the beginning of the next job will NOT be included in the calculation for time spent unemployed. If unemployment exceeds the limits outlined by DHS, DHS may deny me future immigration benefits or may terminate my SEVIS record.
- I am allowed 60 days after the expiration of the OPT EAD to remain in the U.S. for the purpose of preparing for departure, to change education levels at the same school, to transfer to another school, or apply for a change of status.
- Transferring to another school or beginning study at another education level automatically terminates any remaining portion of OPT.
- My duration of status and work authorization are automatically extended if I am a beneficiary of an H-1B petition and a request for change of status providing: 1) H-1B petition is timely filed before OPT expires\*; 2) the stated employment start date is for October 1 of the following fiscal year; and 3) I have not violated the terms or condition of my non-immigrant status. See the separate "Cap Gap" handout for details.  
\* if the H-1B petition is filed during the F-1 60-day grace period after OPT expires only duration of status will be extended. Work authorization will not be extended (so the student can stay in the U.S. until the H-1B is approved, but cannot work during the automatic extension period). Note: Automatic extension of F-1 duration of status and employment are immediately terminated if the H-1B petition is rejected, denied, or revoked.

I certify that I have read and understand the above stated responsibilities that are required of me while engaged in Optional Practical Training. I agree to provide to KU's International Student & Scholars Services Office the required information stated above and understand that failure to do so can result in a violation of F-1 status and subsequent termination of my SEVIS record.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ KUID \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Non KU Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Important: Submit this original signed form to ISSS and keep a copy for your records.

# 17-MONTH STEM OPT EXTENSION

## Request for I-20 Recommendation

### Biographical Info

Surname/Family Name(s): (as it appears in your passport)	Given Name(s):	Middle Name(s):
Mailing Address:	City:	
State:	Zip Code:	
Telephone Number:	Other Phone Numbers:	
List any F-2 Dependent(s):		

### Degree Info

KUID:	Date of degree completion:
Degree and Major(s): <i>e.g. Bachelors in Chemical Engineering</i>	

### Employment Info

Dates of employment authorization as listed on current EAD (Please attach a copy of the EAD)	
Name of STEM Employer:	
Employer's Address:	City:
State:	Zip/Postal Code:

I verify that the information above is accurate. I am requesting an ISSS advisor to determine my eligibility for the STEM OPT extension. I understand that all eligibility requirements must be met before an ISSS advisor can make a recommendation in SEVIS for the STEM OPT extension.

Signature:

Date:

# Please Give This To Your Employer

## Employer Responsibilities for Reporting on Students on a 17-month STEM Extension of Optional Practical Training

Federal law 8 CFR 214.2 (f)(10)(ii)(C)(4) requires employers to report the termination or departure of an OPT employee to the government's Designated School Official (international student advisor at their previous school) 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.

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For convenience in complying with this requirement, the University of Kansas has developed a website for required reporting during a student's period of Optional Practical Training:

<http://www2.ku.edu/~issfacts/OPT>

Employers will need:

- Student's Given Name
- Student's Surname
- Student's Date of Birth
- Student's SEVIS ID # (starts N000...and is above the barcode on the I-20)
  
- Date of Termination or Departure
  
- Company Name
- Complete Mailing Address at the Work Site (not corporate headquarters)
  
- Name, Department and Phone Number of Person Submitting Report

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Please don't hesitate to contact the office of International Student and Scholar Services at the University of Kansas if you should have any questions or trouble with the above website. Thank you.