



Optional Practical Training 17-Month STEM Extension

What is the 17-month OPT extension?

On April 8, 2008, recipients of bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in certain STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) fields can apply for a **one-time** 17-month extension to their post-completion OPT time period for a total period of up to 29 months.

What are the eligibility requirements?

To be eligible for the 17-month STEM extension, the following basic conditions must be met:

- 1) You have not previously received a 17-month OPT extension after earning a STEM degree. You are only eligible for **one** 17-month extension during your lifetime.
- 2) You must be engaging in an unexpired, authorized period of standard post-completion OPT that was granted on the basis of your bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree listed on the Department of Homeland Security STEM Designated Degree Program List.
 - a. For example, you cannot request an extension to your OPT period based on your master's degree in Business even if you received a STEM bachelor's degree.
 - b. The full STEM degree list can be found at http://www.nafsa.org/regulatory_information.sec/regulatory_document_library.dlib/f_and_m_students/dhs_stem_designated_degree_2
- 3) Your employer must be registered in the E-Verify program. The company will either have an E-Verify company identification number if they participate directly **or** an E-Verify client company number if they participate through an E-Verify third party agent.
 - a. After an employer registers with E-verify, they must use E-verify to comply with its I-9 and employment verification obligations for **all** new hires.
- 4) Your employer must agree to report your termination or departure from the company to the International Programs Office or through any other means or process identified by DHS within 48 hours of the event.
 - a. Important Note – it is still not clear how DHS will execute this agreement or how it will be documented.

How do you apply for the 17-month STEM OPT extension?

First:

Complete the STEM Extension Request Form and return to the International Programs Office (IPO) via fax or email. The IPO will review your request to be sure you qualify for the extension. Once approved, you will receive a **new I-20** indicating your STEM extension request on page 3.

Then,

Once you receive your STEM EXTENSION I-20 from the IPO, you will mail all of the following items to the USCIS Service Center that has jurisdiction over your current state of residence.

- Complete Form I-765. Use blue ink to complete and sign your name.
- Address for delivery of the EAD card – use your current residential address. This address also determines which of the four USCS Service Centers will process your application.
- Complete **(c)(3)(c)** in question 16.
- Complete fill-in question 17 with your major as it appears on your I-20 and your employer's name and identification number as listed in the E-verify program.

- **Only recommended** is a statement from your employer regarding how the employment relates to the STEM field of study. This is because the STEM extension must include employment directly related to the STEM field.
- Check or money order made payable to **US Citizenship & Immigration Services** for **\$340**
- Copies of
 - your most recent I-94 (front & back) and visa
 - your passport (with picture)
 - your current EAD card (front & back) and any previous EAD cards (if applicable)
 - your most recent degree that shows your degree name – date awarded – and field of study
 - Note: This can be your diploma **or** an official/unofficial transcript
 - Note: The field of study shown must be on the approved list of STEM fields of study. The IPO will verify this for you.
 - your SEVIS STEM EXTENSION I-20 (do not send your original) and all other previously issued I-20s
 - 2 passport-style photos

Your Responsibilities during 17-month STEM Extension...

- You must report **any** changes to your name, address, or contact information to the International Programs Office within ten days.
- You must also report any changes in your employment information, including periods of Unemployment, to the IPO within ten days.
- You understand that as of April 8, 2008 you cannot accrue more than 120 days of unemployment while on optional practical training.
- You will be required to submit a 'validation report' verifying your name, address, and employer information every six months from the date your OPT extension begins. The IPO will communicate how this 'validation' report is to be submitted.

Important note: While your STEM extension is pending, you are eligible to continue working until you receive notification on the decision of your application. If your application is denied, then you must cease work immediately.

Any questions can be forwarded to the International Programs Office

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