

## **Optional Practical Training (OPT) 17-Month Extension for STEM Degrees (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics)**

### **Background**

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) received input from a wide range of organizations that U.S. schools have been unable to attract talented foreign students for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics) programs due to restrictive immigration and employment practices in the United States. Changes in immigration policy were needed to improve competition with other countries in high-tech industries and advance the U.S. economy.

On April 8, 2008, the DHS published a rule to extend Optional Practical Training (OPT) for F-1 students who have earned STEM degrees in the U.S. The rule allows F-1 students already in a period of approved post-completion OPT to apply to extend that period for up to 17 months, for a maximum total period of 29 months of OPT.

### **Eligibility**

All requirements listed below must be met to be eligible to apply for the 17-month extension:

- F-1 students must be in approved **post-completion** OPT
- Must apply for the 17-month extension before the current post-completion OPT expires
- Must be awarded a degree in a STEM before the current OPT expires (SDSU majors for the STEM degree listed below)
- The STEM degree was the basis for the current period of OPT
- The student has not previously received a 17-month OPT extension after earning a STEM degree
- Employer must be registered in the E-Verify program at the time the student applies for the 17-month extension

### **Dates of Extension**

The employment authorization period for the 17-month OPT extension begins on the day after the expiration of the initial post-completion OPT employment authorization and ends 17 months thereafter, regardless of the date the actual extension is approved.

### **Periods of Unemployment**

Students on OPT are now limited to 90 days of unemployment during the entire period of OPT authorization. This maximum period increases by 30 days for F-1 students who have an approved 17-month OPT period (total of 120 days).

### **Reporting Requirements**

Students are required to inform the ISC within 10 days of any change to their employers name and address. Students must update this information or any period of unemployment at **[www.isc.sdsu.edu/opt](http://www.isc.sdsu.edu/opt)**. Failure to keep the ISC updated on the name and address of your employer could result in a violation of your F-1 status. You must also verify this information with the ISC every six months from the date of the OPT extension.

### **Application and Processing Time Periods**

If you are eligible to extend your OPT, you must make an appointment with an international student advisor at the ISC. Please allow one hour to process your I-20 for OPT extension during the

appointment. You must file another I-765 application with USCIS before the current OPT authorization expires. You may continue to work after you file the extension, although you may receive your new EAD card at a later date.

**Document Checklist - Bring the following to the OPT Extension appointment:**

- Valid passport with I-94
- Check made out to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security” for \$340
- 2 U.S. passport style photos
- EAD Card
- I-765 application (or obtain the form during appointment)
- Company name and address
- Supervisor's name and contact information
- E-Verify number (“you must list the employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or a valid E-Verify Client Company Identification” on the I-765. [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov))
- Copy of diploma or SDSU transcript that shows STEM degree transcript (USCIS requires a “copy of your degree reflecting the conferred degree as well as your major field of study” [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov))

**SDSU STEM Majors and CIP Codes:**

Aerospace Engineering 14.0201	Environmental Engineering 14.1401
Aerospace Studies 14.0201	Epidemiology 26.1309
Astronomy 40.0201	Exercise Physiology 26.0908
Bioengineering 15.0401	Genetics 26.0801
Bioinformatics and Medical Informatics 26.1103	Geographic Information Science 11.0101
Biology 26.0101	Geological Sciences 40.0601 - 40.0605
Biology/Physiology Concentration 26.0901	Industrial Technology 15.0612
Biology/Molecular Biology Concentration 26.0204	Introductory Mathematics 27.0101
Botany 26.0301	Manufacturing Engineering 14.3601
Chemical Physics 40.0508	Math, Applied 27.0301
Chemistry 40.0501	Mathematics 27.0101
Civil Engineering 14.0801 - 14.0805	Mechanical Engineering 14.1901
Computational Science 27.0303	Microbiology 26.0502
Computer Engineering 14.0901	Military Science 29.0101
Computer Science 11.0701	Oceanography 40.0607
Construction Engineering 14.3301	Physical Science 40.0101
Ecology 26.1301 - 26.1303	Physics 40.0801
Electrical Engineering 14.1001	Recombinant DNA Technology 26.0806
Engineering Science 14.1301	Statistics 27.0501
Engineering 14.0101	Zoology 26.0701

For further information on STEM degree majors and policy, please view the following web sites:

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/>

Interim Final Rule <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/E8-7427.htm>

CIP Codes <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/cip2000/ciplist.asp>