

OPT Extension Application Packet for Designated Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Degrees

Eligibility Requirements

17-month extension of post-completion OPT for students with a science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) degree [8CFR§214.2(f)(10)(ii)(C)]

A qualified student may apply for an extension of OPT while in a valid period of post-completion OPT. The extension will be for an additional 17-months, for a maximum of 29 months of OPT, if all the following requirements are met:

- The student has not previously received a 17-month OPT extension after earning a STEM degree.
- Student must be currently participating in a period of standard OPT based on a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree on the DHS STEM Designated Degree Program List:
 - Actuarial Science. CIP Code 52.1304.
 - Computer Science Applications: CIP Codes 11.xxxx (*except* Data Entry/Microcomputer Applications, which are CIP Codes 11.06xx)
 - Engineering. CIP Codes 14.xxxx.
 - Engineering Technologies. CIP Codes 15.xxxx.
 - Biological and Biomedical Sciences. CIP Codes 26.xxxx.
 - Mathematics and Statistics. CIP Codes 27.xxxx.
 - Military Technologies. CIP Codes 29.xxxx.
 - Physical Sciences. CIP Codes 40.xxxx.
 - Science Technologies. CIP Codes 41.xxxx.
 - Medical Scientist (MS, PhD). CIP Code 51.1401

[University of Arizona STEM Major-CIP List](#)

However, **CIP codes ending in 99 are excluded from this list.** DHS described codes ending in 99 as "catch-all" categories usually designated by "Other" in the CIP lists. Degrees associated with CIP codes ending in 99 would not be eligible for the 17-month extension according to that DHS statement.

- Currently working for, or have job offer from, a U.S. employer in a job directly related to the student's major area of study and,
- The employer is registered in the [E-Verify](#) program, as evidenced by either a valid E-Verify company identification number or, if the employer is using a designated agent to perform the E-Verify queries, a valid E-Verify client company identification number, and the employer is a participant in good standing in the E-Verify program, as determined by USCIS.
- The employer agrees to report the termination or departure of an OPT employee to the DSO at the student's school or through any other means or process identified by DHS if the termination or departure is prior to end of the authorized period of OPT. 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.

Applications for 17-month OPT extension 214.2(f)(11)(i)(C)

A student meeting the eligibility requirement may file for a 17-month extension of employment authorization by filing Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, with the appropriate fee, prior to the expiration date of the student's current OPT employment authorization [document]. If a student timely and properly files an application for a 17-month OPT extension, but the Form I-766, Employment Authorization Document, currently in the student's possession, expires prior to the decision on the student's application for 17-month OPT extension, the student's Form I-766 is extended automatically pursuant to the terms and conditions specified in 8 CFR 274a.12(b)(6)(iv).

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 during post-completion OPT 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(E)

During post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment. Students may not accrue an aggregate of more than 90 days of unemployment during any post-completion OPT carried out under the initial 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 OPT period comprising any post-completion OPT carried out under the initial post-completion OPT authorization and the subsequent 17-month extension period.

**Only one 17-Month Extension is allowed.
Be sure to consider at which degree level
you wish to utilize this option.**

Additional reporting obligations for students with an approved 17-month OPT 214.2(f)(12)(ii)

Students with an approved 17-month OPT extension have additional reporting obligations. Compliance with these reporting requirements is required to maintain F-1 status. The reporting obligations are:

- Within 10 days of the change, the student must report to the student's DSO [at ISPS] a change of legal name, residential or mailing address, employer name, employer address, and/or loss of employment.
- The student must make a validation report to the DSO **every six months** starting from the date the extension begins and ending when the student's F-1 status ends, the student changes educational levels at the same school, or the student transfers to another school or program, or the 17-month OPT extension ends, whichever is first. The validation is a confirmation that the student's information in SEVIS for the items in [sic] listed in paragraph (f)(12)(ii)(A) of this section is current and accurate. This report is due to the student's DSO within 10 business days of each reporting date.

You are required to update this information via ISPS website at <http://internationalstudents.arizona.edu/>

Travel Outside of the United States 214.2(f)(13)(ii)

An F-1 student who has an unexpired EAD issued for post-completion practical training and who is otherwise admissible may return to the United States to resume employment after a period of temporary absence. The EAD must be used in combination with an I-20 ID **endorsed for reentry by the DSO within the last six months.** 214.2(f)(13)(ii)

You still need a valid F1 visa and passport valid for at least 6 months into the future. Be sure to also bring a letter from your employer that they expect you to resume to work upon returning to the U.S.

Tax Concerns

In general, students who have been in the United States less than five years are exempt from Social Security (F.I.C.A.) taxes. Your earnings are subject to applicable federal, state, and local taxes. Students must file a tax return on or before April 15 of each year. Students may be entitled to a refund of taxes withheld from their wages if the amount of tax owed is less than the amount withheld. Please see ISPS tax filing webpage for resources available to assist with completing your tax return at: [Tax Filing Resources for UA students](#)

Health Insurance

While regulations do not indicate that students are required to carry health insurance after graduation and participating in OPT, it is nonetheless extremely important that you enroll in an insurance plan. Some employers offer this as part of a benefits package, while others do not. Either way, please be sure to seek appropriate health insurance coverage while on OPT.

17-Month OPT Extension Procedure Checklist

Step 1.

- Read all information above to understand eligibility and responsibility before proceeding.
- Complete the [Document Request Form](#) including current email and home country address.
- Complete the [I-765 form](#) (sign and date the form) and **read** the **Instructions** for I-765 carefully to properly complete the form.
- Make sure you have already submitted [OPT Report Form](#) to ISPS within two weeks of submitting request for 17-Month OPT Extension.
- Clear photocopy of your I-94 card, front and back.
- Clear photocopy of your current EAD card.
- Obtain letter from your employer confirming your continued employment. Be sure it includes Company name, address, EVerify number, supervisor's name and supervisor's email address.
- Submit the completed documents above with your **original Form I-20** to ISPS
You can also make an appointment to see an advisor.

If you are not living in the Tucson area, you may mail these items to:

International Student Programs and Services
University of Arizona
915 North Tyndall Avenue
Tucson, AZ 85721

Optional: If you wish for us to FedEx documents back to you, be sure to fill out the information on page 2 of the Document Request Form

Step 2.

Once you receive your OPT documentation back from ISPS, (including two I-20s: one is now your current form and the other will be stamped "COPY" for mailing) you will need to mail the following materials to USCIS (ISPS recommends that you mail the OPT application materials by certified or express mail.)

- The I-20 stamped "COPY" with original signatures (don't forget to sign bottom of page 1).
- A clear photocopy of your I-94 card, front and back.
- Clear photocopy of your current EAD card, front and back.
- Form I-765 (returned to you by ISPS).
- Copy of your conferred degree reflecting your major field of study.
- Check or money order for \$340. Checks should be made payable to [Department of Homeland Security](#).
- Two (2) passport-style photos – for specifications, please refer to page 6, item C, of the I-765 instructions that you downloaded from USCIS.
- PLEASE REMEMBER MAKE A COPY OF YOUR APPLICATION FOR YOUR RECORDS BEFORE SENDING IT TO USCIS.
- USCIS must receive your application within 30 days of when ISPS has issued your I-20 recommending OPT and BEFORE the end date of your current EAD card.**
- If you live in Arizona, send all materials to the following address:

Express Mail may be sent to:

California Service Center
24000 Avila Road, 2nd Floor, Room 2312
Laguna Niguel, CA 92677

If you do not live in Arizona, please check the I-765 instruction packet for the appropriate Service Center serving the state in which you are residing.

If you have any questions or concerns after reviewing and completing the attached forms, please contact International Student Programs and Services (ISPS) at (520) 621-4627 and make an appointment to see an advisor.
You can also email at OPTinfo@email.arizona.edu