

8. 17 MONTH EXTENSION OF OPT FOR F-1 STUDENTS WITH A STEM DEGREE

8.1. Eligibility

8.1.1. Who is eligible for the STEM extension?

F-1 students who completed a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree in a STEM field and are currently engaged in post-completion OPT may apply for the STEM extension if they have a job or job offer from an [E-Verify employer](#).

8.1.2. Is the extension available to students who completed their post-completion OPT prior to April 8, 2008?

No. The eligibility is not retroactive.

8.1.3. How does a student or DSO know which degrees are designated as STEM degrees?

The [STEM Designated Degree Program List](#) is on the SEVP Web site.

8.1.4. Can a student with a dual major qualify for the STEM extension based on one of the degree programs?

Yes, if one of the degrees is on the [STEM Designated Degree Program List](#) and any job worked while on the STEM extension is related to the student's STEM degree. However, the CIP Code for the student's secondary major will not print on the Form I-20 recommending the STEM extension. The DSO must annotate the Form I-20 with the proper [CIP Code](#) for the secondary major.

8.1.5. Can a student qualify for the STEM extension based on the student's minor?

No.

8.1.6. Can a student who has previously earned a degree in a STEM field and has now earned a non-STEM degree apply for the extension?

No. The STEM extension must be based on the same degree as the post-completion OPT.

8.1.7. How can someone suggest a change to the STEM Designated Degree Program List?

To suggest a change to the list of STEM designated degrees, write to sevis.source@dhs.gov, with STEM Code Change Request in the subject line. Please include your name, phone number, organizational affiliation, the code(s) you would like to see added and the rationale for the addition. Change requests will be reviewed by ICE in conjunction with the Department of Education and other interested government agencies.

Prior to June 9, 2008, you may also make recommendations for changes to the STEM Designated Degree Program List through the public comment process [by submitting a comment on the OPT rule](#).

8.2. Filing for the STEM OPT Extension

8.2.1. What are the DSO's responsibilities when recommending a STEM OPT extension for a student?

Before recommending a STEM extension in SEVIS, a DSO should confirm that:

- The student's education level shown in SEVIS is bachelor's, master's, or doctoral
- The name of the student's major shown in SEVIS is on the [STEM Designated Degree Program List](#)
- SEVIS shows the student is on an approved period of OPT that has not expired
- The employer name and address entered into SEVIS are entered exactly as provided by the student

While the DSO must ensure that the student knows that he or she must work for an [E-Verify employer](#), the DSO is not responsible for verifying an employer's registration with E-Verify.

Note that the extension application of a student who is ineligible for an extension will be denied and the application fee will not be refunded.

8.2.2. When does the student need to file for the extension?

The student must ensure the Form I-765, the supporting evidence, and the fee payment reaches the proper USCIS Service Center before his or her current OPT expires. USCIS recommends that students file within 90 and 120 days of the expiration date of the current OPT.

8.2.3. What are the DSO's responsibilities for assisting a student who is filing for a STEM extension?

The DSO must [verify the student's eligibility for the extension](#), make the recommendation in SEVIS if the school supports the student's request, and print a Form I-20 showing the recommendation.

8.2.4. How and where does the student file for the extension?

The student should follow the directions published on the USCIS Web site for [filing a Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization](#). The student should file with the USCIS Service Center serving the area of the student's current residence.

8.2.5. What is the fee for the application for the STEM extension?

The fee is the current amount for [filing a Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization](#), as listed on the USCIS Web site. At the time this guidance was published, the fee was \$340.

8.2.6. What if the DSO believes the student is eligible for the extension but SEVIS does not show the link needed to request the extension?

The DSO should contact the SEVIS help desk at (800) 892-4829 and request a data fix.

8.2.7. If the extension link shows in SEVIS, does this indicate the student is eligible for the extension?

No. The link is available for all students currently participating in post-completion OPT. The DSO must verify the [individual student's eligibility](#) for the STEM extension.

8.2.8. What documents will meet the USCIS requirements on the Form I-765 for a copy of the student's degree?

The student may provide one of the following documents in order to meet this requirement:

- Official transcripts
- Unofficial transcripts
- Copy of the diploma showing the level and program of study

8.2.9. In Item 17 of the Form I-765, what should the student list as the degree?

The student should list the name of the degree as it is shown on his or her Form I-20. In addition, the [CIP Code](#) for the student's degree will be printed on page 3 of the Form I-20. The USCIS adjudicator will verify that the student's degree is on the STEM Designated Degree Program List by using the CIP Code.

If a student with a dual major has the STEM degree listed as the secondary major in SEVIS, the DSO must annotate this on the Form I-20 the student will submit to USCIS. The student should provide the CIP Code for the secondary major on the Form I-765.

8.3. E-Verify

8.3.1. Is there a resource list of employers who are enrolled in the E-Verify program?

No, there is no public list of employers enrolled in E-Verify.

8.3.2. How do employers enroll in E-Verify?

The USCIS Web site has information on E-Verify and the enrollment procedures at www.uscis.gov/everify.

8.3.3. What does the student need to know about the employer in order to complete the Form I-765 when applying for the STEM extension?

The student must have the employer's name as listed in E-Verify and the employer's E-Verify company identification number or a valid E-Verify client company identification number. This information must be listed in item 17 of the Form I-765.

8.3.4. Is the DSO responsible for verifying the student is working for an E-Verify employer?

No. A USCIS adjudicator will make this determination by verifying the information in Item 17 of the student's Form I-765.

8.4. Employment authorization while the STEM extension application is pending

8.4.1. When does the student's period of STEM extension OPT start?

If the student has properly filed for a STEM extension, the student's period of STEM extension OPT starts the day after the expiration of the student's original period of optional practical training.

The student must comply with all the [requirements for students with a STEM extension](#).

8.4.2. Can the student work with an expired employment authorization document while a STEM extension is pending?

Yes. 8 CFR 214.2(f)(11)(i)(C) and 8 CFR 247a(12)(c)(6)(iv) automatically extends the student's work authorization for up to 180 days while the student's STEM extension application is pending.

8.4.3. Can the student change employers while the STEM extension application is pending?

Yes. However, if the STEM extension period has started, the employer must also be an E-Verify employer. The student must [report the change in employment](#) to his or her DSO.

8.4.4. Can the student travel outside of the United States if his or her employment authorization document expires and the OPT extension request is pending?

No. The student must wait to receive the new employment authorization document.

8.5. How do employers report to a DSO when a STEM extension OPT student is no longer employed?

The school may provide the student with information on how to report the end of the student's employment. The student must provide this information to the employer. If the school does not provide alternative instructions the employer may send the report to the school address listed on the student's Form I-20.

The employer should provide the student's name, SEVIS ID number (if available), and the date the student's employment ended.

8.6. Student responsibilities while on STEM extension OPT

Students pursuing a period of STEM extension OPT must:

- Work in a paid position for an E-Verify employer at least 20 hours per week
- Work in a position related to the STEM degree
- Report to their DSO within 10 days of:
 - Legal name changes
 - A change in residential or mailing address
 - Changes in employer, giving the employer name and employer address
 - Loss of employment
- Send the DSO a validation report every six months starting from the date the STEM extension starts and ending when the student's F-1 status ends or the STEM extension ends, whichever is first. The validation report must include the student's:
 - Full legal name
 - SEVIS identification number (if requested by the school)
 - Current mailing and residential address
 - Name and address of the current employer
 - Date the student began working for the current employer

Students pursuing a period of STEM extension OPT must **not**:

- Work in a paid position for any employer that is not an E-Verify employer
- Have more than 120 days of unemployment time during the entire period of post-completion OPT (regular post-completion OPT and STEM extension OPT).

8.7. DSO responsibilities relating to students who have been granted STEM extension OPT

The DSO must update SEVIS with information on changes to the student's name and address and changes in the student's employer's name and address.

This chart shows how to enter the reported information into SEVIS.

Situation	Employer Name Field	Employer Address Field
New job	Name of the employer [start date mm/dd/yyyy] Example: ABC Inc. [04/15/2008]	Employer address supplied by student
Change to a new job (less than 10 days between jobs)	Name of the new employer [start date mm/dd/yyyy] Example: A New Job, Inc. [06/15/2008]	New employer's address supplied by student
More than 10 days of unemployment	Unemployed [ending date of last job mm/dd/yyyy] Example: Unemployed [07/12/2008]	Leave blank