



RIT
International
Student Services

**F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)
17 Month STEM Extension Information Packet**

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F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT) 17 Month Extension Information

Overview of STEM Extension OPT

F-1 students on OPT who have received a degree in certain fields, referred to as “STEM” fields (science, technology, engineering, or mathematics), will have an opportunity to apply for a one time 17-month extension of their regular 12 month OPT period. Students who file an application for the 17-month OPT extension ***before the end date of the first OPT period***, will be able to continue employment while the extension application is pending, until a final decision on the I-765 or for 180 days, whichever is first. You should apply once you are within 3 months of the end of your first 12 months of OPT.

Eligibility Requirements

Students must meet the following criteria in order to be eligible for a STEM Extension:

1. Maintaining valid F-1 status and pursuing authorized OPT employment in their field of study
2. Completed a Bachelor, Master, or Doctorate degree in a **USCIS-designated STEM field**
3. Employed by an eligible employer which is enrolled in the DHS **E-Verify database**
4. Not previously authorized for a 17-month STEM Extension, at any degree level

STEM Fields

It is important to note that each major at RIT has a particular CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) Code. ***In order to qualify for the 17 month extension, the CIP code for your program must appear on the designated codes list.*** A detailed list of federally approved STEM fields is available at: <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/stemlist.htm>

E-Verify

E-Verify is an Internet-based system operated by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in partnership with the Social Security Administration (SSA). E-Verify is currently free to employers and is available in all 50 states. E-Verify provides an automated link to federal databases to help employers determine employment eligibility of new hires and the validity of their Social Security numbers. For more information:

http://www.dhs.gov/ximgtn/programs/gc_1185221678150.shtm

Types of Employment

Once authorized for STEM Extension OPT, students are allowed to pursue the following additional types of employment, as long as the employer is registered with E-Verify:

- Self-employment (must set up a business and register with E-Verify)
- Employment as an independent contractor (1099 employment)
- Employment through an agency or consulting firm *
- For employment through an agency or consulting firm, the employing agency or consulting firm would need to be registered with E-Verify, but not the company for whom the student is providing services.

OPT STEM Extension Application Procedures

Step One:

Fill out the **Information Sheet for OPT 17 Month STEM Extension** (page 6 of this document) and Form I-765 available online at <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765.pdf>

Step Two:

Fax, mail, or drop off the Information Sheet and completed Form I-765 to International Student Services. An ISS advisor will print out a new I-20 for you which will include a recommendation for your OPT extension. The new I-20 will be mailed to you with an instruction sheet. You will send a copy of this new I-20 with your completed application.

Step Three:

1. Submit the following documents to USCIS for employment authorization:
 - Original Form I-765
 - A photocopy of page 1 and page 3 of the new I-20 with the ISS advisor's recommendation for STEM Extension Optional Practical Training on page 3.
 - A photocopy of both sides of your I-94 Card
 - A copy of photo page (identification page) of your passport. Also include any extra pages that record extensions of the validity of your passport).
 - A copy of the F1 visa page of your passport (even if the visa has expired)
 - A copy of ALL previous I-20s that have been issued to you (pages 1 and 3 only)
 - A copy of your previous OPT card
 - A copy of your transcripts and diploma as long as it states the degree field.
 - Two passport type photographs. Print your name and I-94 card number lightly in pencil on the back of each photo. Put the photos in an envelope and attach it to front of the I-765. **DO NOT CUT THE PHOTOS!**
 - Job offer letter
 - **Fee of \$380.** Checks may be made payable to the Department of Homeland Security. You may send a money order or a personal check drawn on a U.S. bank, NO CASH. Attach the check to the front of the I-765.
2. Copy the entire application for your records.
3. Staple all above documents together and send them by **certified mail** with a return receipt OR **federal express** (so that you have a tracking number) to the U.S. Service Center with jurisdiction over your current residence. The USCIS Service Center Filing Chart is available on page five of this document and in the USCIS I-765 Filing Instructions online at <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765instr.pdf> (page 10).
4. You will receive a notice (Form I-797) from the USCIS.
5. Track the status of your application and current processing times through USCIS, using the Receipt Notice mailed within 2-3 weeks: <https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/jsps/index.jsp>

6. Authorization is granted by the EAD card (Employment Authorization Document):
 - The EAD will be mailed only to the address listed on Form I-765. Government mail cannot be forwarded, so you must notify USCIS immediately if your residential address changes.
 - **You may continue working up to 180 days after your 12-month OPT expires**, while the STEM Extension is pending. Provide a copy of your Receipt Notice to your employer.

Instructions for filling out form I-765 for the 17 month extension

1. **Check first box “renewal”; fill out lines 1 through 17; sign and date:**
2. **#3 Return Address:** This must be an address at which you can receive mail for at least the next 3 ½ months. You cannot put in a forwarding order on this address - the USCIS envelopes state “Do Not Forward.” If the card is sent to an address with a forwarding order, or if you cannot receive mail at the address you use, your card will be returned.
3. **#10 Alien Registration Number:** You can use your I-94 number found on the I-94 card that you received when you entered the US (small white card in your passport) OR the A# listed on your current OPT card.
4. **#11 Previous employment authorization:** Because you are applying for a 17 month extension, please answer “yes” and complete the related information.
5. **#16 Eligibility Categories: for the 17 month extension of OPT write: (c) (3) (C)**
6. **#17 Complete this section with your degree field and your employer’s “E-Verify” number.**
7. **Certification:** Remember to sign and date the I-765

Additional Information Regarding STEM Extension

Reporting Requirements

During the STEM Extension OPT, your valid F-1 status will remain dependent on pursuing authorized employment and reporting all required information through the ISS website at: <http://www.rit.edu/studentaffairs/iss/OPTreporting.html>

Changes in the following information must be reported within **10 days** of any change.

- Change in name, personal address, or email address
- Name and address of employer(s)
- Change in employer information
- Any interruption of employment
- Notification of any changes in your immigration status or departure from the U.S.

Additionally, every six months, ISS is required to verify your employment information, regardless of whether you have changed jobs. When your name appears on the SEVIS Alert for verification, ISS will use your most recently submitted email address and ask you to respond with current address and employer information. FAILURE TO RESPOND will result in termination of your SEVIS record, so it is imperative that you reply to the ISS request.

Employer Reporting Requirements

Employers must agree to notify ISS **within 48 hours** of any termination of employment or departure of the F-1 worker previously authorized for STEM Extension OPT through RIT.

120-Day Unemployment Limit

The cumulative Unemployment Limit is extended to 120 days once the STEM Extension is approved. However, this does not replenish any days reported as unemployed during the regular 12-month OPT authorization. Whatever remains of the initial 90-day allotment is increased only by an additional 30 days throughout the 17 months of STEM Extension OPT. Therefore, if you are unemployed for an aggregate of more than 120 days during your complete 29 months of authorized OPT, your work permission will be terminated and your F-1 status is ended. No grace period currently exists for students who exceed this limit. Periods of unemployment are monitored through the required OPT reporting, so it is important to provide ISS with timely and accurate information. Volunteer, unpaid, and part-time activities (20 hours per week, or more) may be used to satisfy the employment qualification for OPT reporting purposes. Please contact ISS to speak with an advisor about any specific concerns.

Travel Outside the U.S.

Authorization for the STEM Extension OPT extends your eligibility for valid F-1 status and ability to travel. However, in order to document your status, you must prove that work authorization is granted by showing an unexpired EAD card when traveling. While the STEM Extension application is pending, you may continue to travel using the current EAD card authorizing your regular 12-month OPT. Once that card expires, **do not travel until the new STEM Extension EAD card is received**. Travel at any time during F-1 OPT requires the following documents:

1. Valid passport
2. Current I-20, signed for travel by an ISS advisor **within the past six months**.
3. Valid F-1 visa stamp
4. Unexpired EAD card. You may also be asked to demonstrate that you are using your OPT appropriately, by showing proof of current employment.
5. Letter from employer verifying employment.

Additional Considerations

Selecting OPT dates: The STEM Extension OPT will begin immediately after the expiration of your 12-month OPT authorization. There is no option to delay the start date of the extension.

OPT Cap Gap Extensions: F-1 students with a pending or approved H-1B petition are eligible for an automatic extension of their F-1 status and valid OPT work permission. The purpose of this extension is to cover any lapse in status and expiring employment authorization before the H-1B Temporary Worker status can begin (usually limited to Oct 1st). H-1B petitions filed by cap-exempt employers are not intended for this benefit. You are still eligible for the Cap Gap Extension after being approved for the STEM Extension OPT, provided you maintain F-1 status throughout that time and your employer files the H-1B petition on your behalf.

Where to File Your Application

Applicants for a 17 Month STEM Extension of Optional Practical Training must send their application to either the Phoenix, AZ or Dallas, TX lockbox depending on where they live.

USCIS Phoenix and Dallas Lockbox Facilities

If you live in:

Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Guam, or the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands.

Mail your application to: USCIS Phoenix Lockbox

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries: USCIS
PO Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

For Express mail and courier deliveries: USCIS
Attn: AOS
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S
Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85034

If you live in:

Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, U.S. Virgin Islands, or West Virginia

Mail your application to: USCIS Dallas Lockbox

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Deliveries: USCIS
PO Box 660867
Dallas, TX 75266

For Express mail and courier deliveries: USCIS
Attn: AOS
2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business
Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067



RIT
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Student Services

OPTIONAL

I have been working with the following ISS Advisor:

Jeff Cox Kate Blackburn
 Lilli Jensen Sue Joseph

Information Sheet for OPT 17 Month STEM Extension

An ISS advisor will make a recommendation for your OPT extension in the SEVIS database and print out a new I-20 with the recommendation and extension dates printed on page 3. To do this we need the following information:

FIRST NAME: _____ **LAST NAME:** _____

University ID# _____ **Telephone #** _____

SEVIS ID# (upper right hand corner of your I-20, starts with "N"): **N** _____

CURRENT OPT END DATE: _____ **Email Address** _____

Current Residential Address:

Address to which we should mail the new I-20 (if different then residential address):

Degree Field (field in which you earned your RIT degree) _____

Your Job Title: _____

Name of Employer: _____

Employer's E-Verify ID#: _____

Address of Employer:

Supervisor's Name: _____ **Supervisor's Tel:** _____

You may drop off, mail, or fax this form to ISS.

International Student Services
 Rochester Institute of Technology Fax: 585-475-7419
 42 Lomb Memorial Drive
 Rochester, NY 14623

Note: This form is only provided as an example. Please download the most recent version of Form I-765 at <http://www.uscis.gov>

OMB No. 1615-0040; Expires 09/30/11

Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

**I-765, Application For
Employment Authorization**

Do not write in this block.

Remarks	Action Block	Fee Stamp
A#		
Applicant is filing under §274a.12 _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Application Approved. Employment Authorized / Extended (Circle One) until _____ (Date). Subject to the following conditions: _____ (Date). Application Denied. <input type="checkbox"/> Failed to establish eligibility under 8 CFR 274a.12 (a) or (c). <input type="checkbox"/> Failed to establish economic necessity as required in 8 CFR 274a.12(c)(14), (18) and 8 CFR 214.2(f)		

I am applying for: Permission to accept employment.
 Replacement (of lost employment authorization document).
 Renewal of my permission to accept employment (attach previous employment authorization document).

1. Name (Family Name in CAPS) (First) _____ (Middle) _____	Which USCIS Office? _____	Date(s) _____
2. Other Names Used (include Maides Name) _____	Results (Granted or Denied - attach all documentation) _____	
3. Address in the United States (Number and Street) _____ (Apt. Number) _____	12. Date of Last Entry into the U.S. (mm/dd/yyyy) _____	
(Town or City) _____ (State/Country) _____ (ZIP Code) _____	13. Place of Last Entry into the U.S. _____	
4. Country of Citizenship/Nationality _____	14. Manner of Last Entry (Visitor, Student, etc.) _____	
5. Place of Birth (Town or City) _____ (State/Province) _____ (Country) _____	15. Current Immigration Status (Visitor, Student, etc.) _____	
6. Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy) _____ 7. Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	16. Go to Part 2 of the Instructions, Eligibility Categories. In the space below, place the letter and number of the category you selected from the instructions (For example, (a)(8), (c)(17)(iii), etc.). Eligibility under 8 CFR 274a.12 (c) (3) (C)	
8. Marital Status <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced	17. If you entered the Eligibility Category, (c)(3)(C), in item 16 above, list your degree, your employer's name as listed in E-Verify, and your employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or a valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number in the space below. Degree: _____ Employer's Name as listed in E-Verify: _____ Employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or a valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number: _____	
9. Social Security Number (include all numbers you have ever used) (if any) _____		
10. Alien Registration Number (A-Number) or I-94 Number (if any) _____		
11. Have you ever before applied for employment authorization from USCIS? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (If "Yes," complete below) <input type="checkbox"/> No		

Certification

Your Certification: I certify, under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America, that the foregoing is true and correct. Furthermore, I authorize the release of any information that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services needs to determine eligibility for the benefit I am seeking. I have read the Instructions in Part 2 and have identified the appropriate eligibility category in Block 16.

Signature _____ Telephone Number _____ Date _____

Signature of Person Preparing Form, If Other Than Above: I declare that this document was prepared by me at the request of the applicant and is based on all information of which I have any knowledge.

Print Name _____ Address _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Remarks	Initial Receipt	Resubmitted	Relocated			Completed	
			Rec'd	Sent	Approved	Denied	Retuned

