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ISSI form 204: The 17 month OPT extension information sheet & guide for STEM majors

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The 17 Month OPT EXTENSION Information Sheet & Guide for STEM Majors –ISSI Form 204

Who can file for a 17-month OPT extension?

An F-1 student who has completed a Bachelor's, Master's or doctoral degree in a STEM field and who has been granted authorization to work on Post-completion Optional Practical Training (Post-completion OPT) may apply for the 17 month OPT extension as long as s/he has a job or job offer that is related to a degree in a STEM designated field and has an employer that is registered with E-Verify.

When must an F-1 student file for the OPT extension for STEM majors?

STEM majors should file for the OPT extension *within 90 to 120 days prior to the expiration date of the current approved end date of Post-completion OPT*. Check your Employment Authorization Card (EAC) for the correct end date of your employment on Post-completion OPT.

Steps to take before contacting an ISSI Advisor for the OPT 17 month extension for STEM majors

An F-1 student authorized for Post-completion Optional Practical in a STEM field must complete and assemble the forms and documentation listed below before contacting an Advisor at the ISSI. Most forms can be found at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) homepage. The rest of the documentation is already in your possession and has to be assembled by you.

- *If you are in Massachusetts, and can schedule an appointment, please do so after you have assembled all documentation and are ready to process your 17 month OPT extension I-20. You will need to bring all documentation with you to your appointment. Call the ISSI front desk at 617-373-2310 to book the appointment.*
- *If you are outside the state of Massachusetts, you may opt to scan the completed forms and documentation and send them to the International Student Advisor responsible for handling 17 month OPT extensions or picked up by you or a third party.*
- *If your employer is not willing to give you the E-verify number of the company or has hired a legal firm to handle 17 month OPT extensions, please inform your ISSI Advisor for further details.*

Checklist of Forms and Documentation to gather for the 17 Month OPT extension application:

- (1) Complete an original Form G-1145, E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance (optional) which can be found at: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/g-1145.pdf>
- (2) Complete original Form I-765, which can be downloaded from: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-765.pdf>

The Form I-765 should be completed in its entirety and signed in blue ink.

- For *Item number 16*, the code for eligibility category should be entered as “(c) (3) (C);”
- For *Item 17*:
 - a. Enter your degree as it appears on your transcript or diploma. Write out the degree and do not abbreviate.
 - b. In the event, you have a dual major and the STEM major is listed as the secondary major in SEVIS, your *Designated School Official (DSO)* or *ISSI Advisor* must annotate this on the Form I-20, page 3, and you will note this in Item 17 in the space next to the degree.
 - c. Enter the name of the E-Verify employer, and the employer's E-Verify number.

- (3) There is a filing fee required by Form I-765. Write out a personal check or money order for the amount of \$380, payable to the 'U.S. Department of Homeland Security.'
- (4) Provide one of the following documents to fulfill the requirement for a copy of your degree:
- Official transcript(s); OR
 - Copy of your diploma showing the level and program of study
- (5) Make photocopies of the documents indicated below:
- Pages 1 & 3 of all previous I-20s including the last I-20 with Post-Completion OPT recommendation.
Your new 17 month OPT extension I-20 which will be issued to you as part of this application process, will need your signature before you *copy it and include it with other I-20s copied by you for this application.*
 - Form I-94 (front and reverse sides);
 - Previous Employment Authorization Card(s) (EAC) (front and reverse sides). *You may have more than one EAC if you have been authorized Pre-completion OPT or have been authorized OPT at another program level or at another university;*
 - Copy the following pages from your passport(s):
 - Biographical page;
 - Page with expiration date and/or renewal dates;
 - Pages that include your F-1 visa stamps
(If you had the first F-1 visa stamp in an expired or older passport, you need to copy the biographical page, page with expiration date and/or renewal dates of that older passport, and previous F-1 visa stamps from the older passport, especially if you have not been home since your initial arrival to the U.S.)
 - If you entered the U.S. initially in a status other than F-1 and you changed your status in the U.S., you will need to include a copy of the Change of Status approval Form I-797 and the I-94 (front and reverse sides) attached at the bottom of that form
 - Obtain (2) full-frontal passport style photos as required. Visit the following links for data on photo specifications: <http://www.northeastern.edu/issi/pdfs/M-603.pdf> and <http://www.northeastern.edu/issi/pdfs/M-603.pdf>

When you have assembled and compiled the documentation above, you are ready to contact the ISSI for an appointment with ISSI Advisor currently handling 17 month OPT extensions OR email the Advisor all scanned documents for processing by email.

If your local address has changed, make sure you provide your most recent address. If you are moving, then you will have to include the name and local address of a person you can trust to receive your EAC card or any other documentation sent by USCIS. Make sure to make appropriate arrangements accordingly and in a timely manner.

The ISSI Advisor will review your prepared documentation and issue you an OPT extension I-20 with the appropriate recommended extension dates. She will either see you or inform you by email of any details or instructions to follow.

IMPORTANT: All documents must be received by USCIS prior to the expiration date of the 12 month period of Post-Completion OPT.

What happens while the 17 month OPT extension requested is pending at USCIS?

The period of the 17 month OPT extension starts the day after the expiration of a student's original period of approved Post-completion OPT. While a student's 17 Month OPT extension application is pending, that student may continue working for up to 180 days (6 months). The following Code of Federal Regulations, 8CFR 214.2(f)(11)(i)(C) and 8CFR 247a.12(c)(6)(iv), automatically extend your stay while the application is pending. However, you must have already submitted all the appropriate documentation to USCIS and paid the filing fee prior to the expiration date of your Post-Completion OPT.

Processing Period for the 17 month OPT Extension & Receipt Notice, Form I-797

After the documentation leaves the respective Lockbox, the documentation is forwarded to the USCIS Service Center where it is adjudicated within a period of 60 to 90 days. In about fifteen days of USCIS' receipt of your application for the 17 month OPT extension, you should be receiving a Form I-797, a confirmation or receipt of having received your application, including the filing fee with a case number that begins with EAC.... This will enable you to track your application on-line at the USCIS homepage.

TRAVEL ADVISORY: Can a student, applying for the 17 month OPT extension for STEM majors, travel outside the U.S. while the application is pending?

No, a student must wait to receive a new Employment Authorization Card (EAC). For a student to travel while on the 17 month extension, s/he must have a valid EAC card, a signed I-20, and a job offer letter from an E-Verified company. Traveling without a valid EAC is very risky. If any further documentation is needed, you may find yourself unable to return from overseas if you left without your EAC, endorsed I-20 and job offer letter from the E-Verified company.

Can a student change employers while the 17 month OPT extension application is pending?

Yes, a student can change employers, but if the OPT extension period has started, the new employer must also be an E-Verify Employer. The student must report the change of employer to the ISSI Advisor.

What must the E-Verify employer report, if you are no longer employed?

The E-Verify employer must report to the International Student & Scholar Institute (ISSI):

- (a) Your full name;
- (b) Your SEVIS ID number; and
- (c) Provide a statement to your ISSI Advisor stating that you are no longer employed and provide the date (month/day/year) when your employment ended.

What are an F-1 student's responsibilities while on a 17 month OPT extension?

The student on a 17 month STEM extension must:

- (a) work in a position for an E-Verify employer for at least 20 hours per week
- (b) work in a position related to the STEM degree;
- (c) NOT be *unemployed* more than 120 days during the entire period of the Post-completion OPT and OPT extension. The days of unemployment will count from the *start date of the approved OPT or the day the OPT is approved*, whichever is later.

An F-1 student on the 17 month OPT extension period is required to report to the ISSI Advisor the following, within 10 days: (1) any legal name change; (2) change in residential or mailing address; (3) change in employer, providing the employer name and address and; (4) any loss of employment and the date (month/day/year) the employment ended.

Where to mail your application for the 17 Month OPT extension: Once you have your documentation and I-20 for the 17 month extension, and you have copied all documentation and assembled the packet, you should send it to the following address depending on where you live. It is recommended that you mail your OPT packet certified return receipt requested if using U.S. Postal Service.

If you live in Massachusetts or any of the following states listed here, mail your OPT packet to:

Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, deliveries:	USCIS Dallas Lockbox For U.S. Postal Service (USPS)
Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, <u>Massachusetts</u> , Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, deliveries:	USCIS P.O. Box 660867 Dallas, TX 75266
South Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, U.S. Virgin Islands or West Virginia	For Express mail and courier service USCIS Attn: AOS 2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business Suite 400 Lewisville, TX 75067

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If you live outside of Massachusetts or any state listed below, mail your OPT packet to:

<u>If you live in:</u> Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, deliveries: Wisconsin, Wyoming, or Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	<u>File your application at:</u> USCIS Phoenix Lockbox For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries: USCIS P.O. Box 21281 Phoenix, AZ 85036 For Express mail and courier service USCIS Attn: AOS 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S Suite 100 Phoenix, AZ 85034
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Six-Month Validation Report for F-1 Students on the 17 Month OPT extension

A student on a 17 month OPT extension is required to do a *6-Month Validation Report* to the ISSI Advisor form the start date of the 17 Month OPT extension until when F-1 status ends or the OPT extension ends, whichever is earlier. The six-month validation report to the ISSI Advisor is due within 10 days of each reporting date & must include:

- (a) Legal name or legal name change;
- (b) Current local & mailing address **
- (c) Name & address of current employer;
- (d) Date (month/day/year) you started working for the current employer.
- (e) **Not required but necessary as NU Husky email accounts will close one year after graduation: new email address