24-Month Extension
Optional Practical Training
OPT
ISSO Information

ISSO Address:
Iowa State University
3248 Memorial Union
2229 Lincoln Way
Ames, IA 50014-1097

Contact Info:
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Appointments (20 minutes)

ISSO Address:
Iowa State University
3248 Memorial Union
2229 Lincoln Way
Ames, IA 50014-1097
International Student Advisors
Designated School Officials (DSO)

• Ashley Huth – *College of Business, Design, Human Sciences, Vet Med, Agriculture and Life Sciences*

• Katherine Lundberg – *College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and Mechanical Engineering*

• Jessica Fincham – *College of Engineering (excluding Mechanical Engineering)*
Agenda

• 24-Month OPT Extension
  • Changes to the STEM extension
  • Eligibility requirements
  • Application process
  • Transition procedures
What is the OPT STEM Extension?

• An extension of Optional Practical Training for students who have completed a degree in Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics

• A benefit of F-1 status that takes place immediately after a period of post-completion OPT

• Allows students to engage in practical experience that is directly related to their level and major after they complete their degree requirements

• Valid for 24 months (after initial 12 months of OPT)
Changes to the STEM Extension
Changes to the STEM Extension

• 24 month extension
• Two extensions in lifetime
• Extension can be based on previous STEM degree
  • Must follow period of post-completion OPT
• Student and employer must complete Form I-983, Training Plan
• Can apply no earlier than 90 days before post-completion OPT EAD ends
• 150 days maximum of unemployment during post-completion OPT and STEM OPT
• Additional reporting requirements
Eligibility
Mandatory Degree Requirements

The degree that is the basis for the 24-month OPT Extension must be:

- From a SEVP-certified U.S. educational institution
- Listed on the STEM Designated Degree Program List
  - New list effective May 10, 2016

Student is eligible after completing all course requirements

- Excluding creative component/thesis/dissertation
Previous Degree Requirements

• The STEM OPT may be based on a previously obtained STEM degree that was:
  o Conferred within past 10 years
  o From a U.S. educational institution that is SEVP-certified
  o Included on the current STEM Designated Degree Program List

• Must be in a period of post-completion OPT when applying

• All requirements must be met at the time of the Designated School Official’s (DSO) STEM OPT recommendation
2nd STEM Opportunity

- STEM OPT Extension available for a 2nd degree completed at a higher educational level
- Must be used immediately after a period of post-completion OPT
Employment Requirements

• Employment on STEM OPT must be directly related to the STEM major

• Employment on STEM OPT must happen immediately after a period of post-completion OPT

• Employer must be E-Verified

• Employee and employer must complete the Form I-983, Training Plan
  • Employer agrees to report the termination or departure of an OPT student to the DSO within 5 days of the termination or departure
Compensation and Time Requirements

• Must be commensurate with terms and conditions applicable to the employer’s similarly situated U.S. workers in the area of employment

• Required to work at least 20 hours per week
  • Excluding time off taken consistent with leave-related policies

• Not allowed to volunteer while on STEM OPT

• Must disclose any adjustments on the Form I-983
Form I-983, Training Plan

• Form is used for:
  • Identifying goals for the STEM opportunity and specific knowledge, skills, and techniques that will be gained
  • Explaining how goals will be achieved
  • Obtaining a performance evaluation
  • Describing methods of oversight and supervision
  • Explaining how the training is directly related to the student’s qualifying STEM degree

• Completed I-983 must be submitted before the DSO may recommend an OPT Extension
  • ICE and/or USCIS may request a copy. Must be kept updated.

• New I-983 required when starting with a new employer or when changes are made.
  • Student must submit a new I-983 within 10 days of change.
Form I-983, Evaluation Requirements

• Student must submit a self-evaluation of their progress toward the training goals outlined in Form I-983
  • Student and employer must sign

• Require an initial evaluation within 12 months and concluding evaluation by 24 months
  • Due within 10 days following the conclusion of the reporting period

• Changes to the Form I-983, Training Plan must be reported to the DSO
  • Student and employer must submit a modified Form I-983
Changes to the Form I-983

• Student and employer are required to submit a modified Form I-983 to DSO if any changes are made

• Material changes and deviations include:
  – Any change of Employer Identification Number
  – Any reduction in compensation that is not tied to reduction in hours worked
  – Any significant decrease in hours worked per week
  – Any decrease in hours worked below the minimum 20 hour weekly requirement
  – Any change that makes the I-983 inaccurate
Additional Obligations

• Students are expected to submit any updates to their DSO, as the Department of Homeland Security may conduct a site visit to any employer
  • May provide notice to employer 48 hours in advance

• Must update ISSO within 10 days of a change to legal name, living address, employer address, employer name, and/or loss of employment

• Required to complete a validation report for ISSO every 6 months while on STEM OPT Extension
  • Due within 10 business days of each reporting date

• Students granted a 24-month STEM OPT Extension may not accrue an aggregate of more than 150 days of unemployment
Periods of Unemployment

• **Allowed up to 150 days of unemployment during post-completion OPT and STEM OPT**
  - Count unemployment days between start date on post-completion OPT Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and end date of STEM OPT
  - Count all days, including weekends and holidays, during unemployment
  - Count any week employed less than 20 hours as a week of unemployment
  - Count days outside the U.S., if unemployed

• **Considered a violation of F-1 status to go over 150 days of unemployment**
  - Student is required to keep track of unemployment periods
Application Process
Application Timeline

• In order to eligible for STEM OPT, the application:
  • **Must be received by USCIS on or before the end date** of the post-completion OPT EAD
  • **Will only be accepted by USCIS as early as 90 days** before the end date of the post-completion OPT EAD

• USCIS may take over 90 days to process the application

• As long as application is timely and properly filed, student is able to continue work for up to 180 days while the application is being processed

• Work performed after post-completion OPT EAD end date must be directly related to STEM major
**Application Process**

1. Verify that you are eligible for the STEM OPT Extension
2. Complete the I-983, Training Plan with your employer
3. Complete the STEM OPT e-form on Cystart
4. Compile all required application materials
5. Wait for ISSO to notify you that the STEM OPT I-20 has been completed and is ready for submission
6. Bring or send application materials to ISSO for review
7. Completed application will be mailed to USCIS by ISSO
8. Receive a receipt notice within 2-3 weeks after submission from USCIS
9. If STEM OPT is approved, USCIS will mail your new EAD to ISSO
10. ISSSO will contact you regarding EAD collection
Required Application Materials

- Check for $380 to the “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”
- 2 identical passport photos taken within 30 days
- Typed Form I-765
- Typed Form G-1145
- Copy of new STEM OPT I-20
- Copy of diploma or transcript
- Copy of all previous EADs
- Copy of electronic or paper I-94 record
- Copy of passport pages with biographical info and expiration date
- Copy of visa
Transition Procedures
Transition Procedures

• Students whose applications for a 17-month OPT Extension are still pending on or after May 10, 2016 will be issued a Request for Evidence (RFE)

• The RFE will request:
  • The student submit a completed I-983, Training Plan to the DSO
  • A STEM OPT I-20 be created by the DSO and signed by the student

• Once the RFE is submitted, the processing time will resume

• Students will be given a 24-month extension, instead of a 17-month extension
Transition Procedures

• Students whose **17-month OPT Extensions are approved before May 10, 2016** may be eligible for a 7 month extension if they:
  • Properly file a Form I-765 with USCIS between May 10, 2016 and August 8, 2016
  • Have at least 150 calendar days remaining prior to the end of their 17-month extension at the time the I-765 is properly filed
  • Meet all requirements for the 24 month STEM OPT Extension
  • Submit a completed Form I-983, Training Plan, to the DSO

• Students granted an additional 7-month period of OPT are considered to be in a period of 24-month OPT Extension
  • Receive total of 150 days of unemployment after 7-month period of OPT Extension has been approved
Questions?