

24-Month Extension of Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA DULUTH

Summary:

The 12-month limit on OPT can be extended by 24 months, for certain STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) degree holders.

Visit the ISS 24-month STEM OPT extension website to determine if your field and CIP Code are included in the list.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Currently authorized for post-completion OPT, working for a U.S. employer in a job directly related to your field of study, and have not accumulated more than 90 days of unemployment.
- Completed a Bachelor's, Master's or Doctoral degree in a field on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) STEM Designated Degree Program list.
- At the time of application you must be employed or have a job offer.
- You must have a job-offer or be employed by an employer registered with the "E-Verify" federal verification system.
- The job must be paid and be for at least 20 hours per week.
- Have not received a 24-month OPT extension for the STEM degree you are basing your extension application upon.
- The STEM extension can only be granted twice per person in a lifetime.
- The STEM Extension can only be granted once per degree level and the second extension must be at a higher degree level than the first STEM Extension.
- The STEM extension must be from an SEVP-certified institution that is accredited.
- Multiple employers—students can have multiple employers, but each employer must employ the student for no less than 20 hours per week.
- Self-employment is not possible, and employment through agencies/consulting firms is difficult—the employer signing the I-983 must be the same that employs you and supervises you.

When to Apply:

Apply to USCIS up to 90 days before your current EAD expires. Keep in mind, ISS needs at least 5 working days to process your I-20 recommending the STEM extension after all completed materials are submitted. We recommend submitting your request to ISS 100 days before your current EAD expires.

Step 1: Request OPT Recommendation from ISS

ISS must process a recommendation for your OPT request. 5 working days are required to process a recommendation for OPT. Please submit the following items to an ISS adviser. ISS cannot accept your application for processing unless all these items are completed and submitted:

- Student Request Form
- Draft Form I-765*
- Valid Passport
- Form I-983

*The Form I-765 and instructions for completing form I-765 can be found on the USCIS website (go to "FORMS"): <http://www.uscis.gov> (please also see links below for additional I-765 instructions).

- If the extension is based on a previous degree, please notify ISS because you must submit additional documents

Step 2: Submit the Following to USCIS

Please Note:

- OPT applications must be received by USCIS before your current EAD card expires.
- **Do NOT submit anything to USCIS before receiving your new I-20 recommending STEM OPT from ISS**
- For instructions on submitting the online I-765 application:
 - <https://z.umn.edu/Online-I-765>
- If you prefer to submit a paper I-765 application and mail it to USCIS, contact an ISS advisor.
- Do NOT submit more than one STEM OPT application to USCIS (e.g. only submit the online form or only submit the paper form, do not submit both).

Step 3: Wait for EAD to be Mailed from USCIS

- It usually takes approximately 2 to 5 months for USCIS to process your request and mail your EAD to the address listed on Form I-765.
- You should receive a receipt notice (Form I-797) from USCIS (online and/or via mail depending on how you applied). Keep this for your records.
- Applicants who file a timely application can continue employment while the extension application is pending, until a final decision on the I-765 -or- for 180 days, whichever comes first.
- If you change your address during this time, you must file form AR-11 online, update your address in your USCIS account, and update your address in MyU.
- If there is a problem with your application, you may receive a request for evidence from USCIS. If you do, send a copy of the RFE notice to ISS for assistance.
- The EAD will reflect the dates of your employment authorization.

Step 4: Important Reporting Requirements While on Your 24-month OPT Extension

- During OPT you are still in F-1 status at UMD
- ISS is required to have a copy of your EAD. Upon receipt of your EAD, please go to MyISSS (<https://myiss.umn.edu>) and upload a copy of the front and back of the EAD card.
- SEVIS requires verification that you are actively employed along with the name and address of your current employer at 6 months and again at 12 and 18 months after the start date of your 24-month extension whether or not there has been a change to this information. You are required to update ISS with your employer info every 6 months, even if it does not change.
- Failure to verify your OPT employment info or to submit I-983 evaluations within 10 days of the due date will result in failure to maintain your F-1 status.
- NOTE: You are responsible for keeping track of these dates! ISS will not send you a reminder.

Travel Outside the U.S. During Your 24-month Approved OPT Extension

Travel with these items: Passport with valid visa stamp, unexpired EAD card, letter of employment, I-20 form with valid travel signature.

(Travel signatures are only valid for 6 months)

NOTE: Per SEVP guidance, overseas travel is not recommended when your 24-month OPT extension application is pending and your EAD has expired.

I-983 Reporting Requirements

- An updated form I-983 must be submitted to ISS within 10 days of starting new employment or if there are material changes to the I-983 plan: e.g. change of employer or EIN, reduction in compensation, significant decrease in hours per week worked or any decrease below the 20 hours per week required under the STEM rule, etc.
- You must tell ISS within 5 business days of employment termination or departure
- Students must complete two self-evaluations during their STEM extension, one before the end of the first 12 months of STEM OPT - "Evaluation of student progress". The second concluding evaluation at the end of their 24 months -"Final evaluation of student progress". This must be signed by the student and their immediate supervisor, and then a copy of the document must be submitted to ISS.
- Within 10 days of changing employers, you must submit a new I-983 with the new employer information. You must also submit a Final Evaluation from your previous employer.
- Also note that the Department of Homeland Security may conduct employer on-site reviews at the worksite.

Additional Reporting Requirements:

- You are required to update your mailing address and phone number in MyU within 10 days of any changes.
- You are required to report changes to the name and address of your employer or any interruption in your employment to ISS within 10 days of any change.
- Accumulated unemployment during the entire OPT authorization period may not exceed 150 days. Employment must be 20 hours per week or more. Volunteer work or unpaid internships in your field do not count as employment on STEM OPT. Keep written documents of all employment. If you have accumulated more than 150 days of unemployment, you will no longer be in F-1 status. Please notify ISS several weeks before you reach 150 days of unemployment.
- Notify ISS if you change your visa status or permanently depart the U.S. before your OPT period ends.
- Official admission to a new degree program and transfer to a new school during OPT will void any remaining time on your EAD. This time cannot be re-captured at a later date.
- As a person on an F-1 visa at UMD, you are required to have the University health insurance at all times. If you have an employer-sponsored group health plan, you may request a waiver. Talk to your ISS advisor about how to continue your insurance.

- **Failure to report changes of information, submit I-983 evaluations, and complete 6 month OPT reporting within the specified time periods may result in the loss of your F-1 legal status and/or the denial of future immigration benefits.**

Disclaimer

- ISS is able to provide you with general guidance. However, any advice provided to you by our office, as well as the information in this packet, should not be construed as legal advice. Additionally, due to the fluid nature of government interpretation, USCIS may change its interpretation of these immigration laws/regulations and eligibility requirements for benefits, at any time. We will do our best to provide you with the most current guidance. Each case is fact-specific and it is advised that you contact an experienced immigration attorney if you have questions regarding your situation.

24-Month Extension of Post-Completion OPT Student Request

Student Request

Student should complete this portion.

Student's Name: Family First Middle

UMD Student ID #: SEVIS ID #:

Email: Phone:

Academic Major (I-20): Degree Level (I-20) e.g. BA, BS, MA, MS, PhD:

Visa Expiration Date: Month/Day/Year
Passport Expiration Date: Month/Day/Year

Have you sent a copy of your current EAD to ISS? Yes No

Have you reported your employment information to ISS? Yes No

Have you updated your current mailing address in MyU? Yes No

Have you ever been granted employment authorization for a STEM extension of OPT? Yes No

If Yes, at what degree level? _____

Living Expenses:

Living expenses: \$ (minimum of 15,986)

Expenses of dependents: \$

1 dependent \$8,292 2 dependent \$11,652
3 dependent \$14,352 4 dependent \$17,100

Total Expenses: \$

Sources of Funding:

Personal funds/savings: \$

Funds from another source: \$

Specify source:

Total Funding: \$

On which degree are you applying for the 24-month extension

Current EAD dates from: Month/Day/Year to: Month/Day/Year

24-month extension dates from: Month/Day/Year to: Month/Day/Year

Employer (Company) Name:

Employer Address: City State Zip

STATEMENT: *I have read the attached cover pages regarding optional practical training and fully understand the implications of the authorization. The information I have provided is true and correct.*

Signature Month/Day/Year

ISS will complete this section:

- Previous OPT
- Previous STEM extension
- Completed degree
- Address checked
- Travel discussed
- Passport expiration
- Completed I-983
- Employment is paid
- Employment is not through temp agency, consulting firm, or self employment

Date submitted to ISS Month/Day/Year

Date Completed I-983 Received _____

Date Completed I-765 Received _____

90 Days Prior _____

Adviser's initials _____