For Graduates with “STEM Majors”
Optional Practical Training using the 17-Month OPT/STEM Extension

Under this provision, the current 12-month limit on post-completion OPT can be extended by an additional 17 months (total of 29 months of OPT eligibility) only for graduates with certain designated majors in “STEM” fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) and who are employed by an employer enrolled in the “E-Verify” program. Below, the alumna/us is referred to as the “student,” because the visa remains the F-1, a “student” visa.

Eligibility: To be eligible for the 17-month STEM extension, the following must be satisfied:

- The student must have a bachelor’s degree with a USCIS-designated STEM major.
  
  Note: The only Amherst majors eligible for the STEM extension are: astronomy; biology; chemistry; computer science; geology; mathematics; statistics; physics, neuroscience, biochem/biophysics.

- The student must be currently participating in an approved period of post-completion OPT and currently engaging in work directly related to the STEM-designated major.

- The student’s current OPT employment and intended employment during the STEM extension period must be directly related to the student’s STEM-designated major.
  
  Note: If a student has double majors, one a STEM major and one a non-STEM major, then to be eligible for the 17-month STEM extension, the student’s employment during the regular, post-completion OPT period must be directly related to the STEM major, not the non-STEM major. If a student with a double major obtains regular post-completion OPT on the non-STEM major, then the student is ineligible for the STEM extension.

- The student’s employer must be registered in good standing in “E-Verify,” a USCIS electronic employment verification system, at the time the student submits an application for extension.
  
  Note: Information on the E-Verify program is available at www.uscis.gov/everify. A list of employers can be found at http://www.uscis.gov/e-verify/about-program/e-verify-employers-search-tool

- The employer must agree to report the student’s termination or departure from the employment.

- The student must agree to make mandatory, periodic “validation” reports every six month during the STEM / OPT extension period to the Foreign Student Advisor (Dean Carolyn Bassett), at the student’s undergraduate institution. That report must include: full legal name; current mailing and residential address; name and address of the current employer; and the date the student began working for the current employer.

Application:

- The student must provide Lauren Clarke with the employer’s company name as listed in “E-Verify” and the employer’s assigned E-Verify “company identification number.”

- Complete the the I-765; it is a fillable form here. Go to http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis and type “Download form I-765” in the search field
  - check the top square that says “Renewal of my permission to accept employment”
  - complete section 11 with “yes”; Vermont Service Center; etc.
  - complete section 16 with (c ) (3 ) (c )
  - complete section 17

- Please submit a scan or fax of the new I-765 form to Lauren Clarke. She will verify your eligibility and certify that your major is on the designated STEM list, and complete the recommendation of the OPT extension in your SEVIS record. You must do this prior to mailing your I-765 packet; e-filing with USCIS is NOT recommended. We will notify you when the recommendation has been completed. Amherst will
mail you your new I-20AB, which you will need to sign, copy and include in the application packet (detailed below).

- The student must then submit via mail the new, complete I-765 & OPT application packet (detailed below), including $380 fee.
  
  Note: It is not possible to apply for the 17-month STEM extension at the same time you submit your application for the regular, post-completion OPT.

- The student’s I-765 application packet for the OPT-STEM extension must be received by USCIS prior to the last day of the current post-completion OPT period (i.e., prior to the expiration date of the current EAD card). Eligible students can file an application for the STEM extension up to 120 days prior to the expiration date of the current OPT.

- Mailing procedures: The application is first mailed to a USCIS “Lockbox,” for check processing, then is forwarded by the Lockbox personnel to the USCIS Vermont Service Center.

For United States Postal Service (USPS) Deliveries, via “certified mail / return receipt requested” to:

USCIS
Dallas Lockbox
PO Box 660867
Dallas, TX 75266

For Express mail and courier deliveries to:

USCIS
Attn: AOS
2501 S. State Hwy, 121, Business Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067

IMPORTANT: Address may be different if your address on the I765 is not in Massachusetts. Check with us before sending.

Employment during the STEM Extension:

- The STEM extension employment authorization period will start the day after the expiration of the student’s original period of regular post-completion OPT and will end 17-months later.

- A student who has properly filed an I-765 application for the OPT extension prior to the end date of the initial period of post-completion OPT can continue employment while the extension application is pending, until a final decision on the I-765 is made, or for 180 days after the expiration of the current EAD card, whichever comes first.

- Students may change employers during the STEM extension period, but the new employer must also be an E-Verify employer and the new job must be directly related to the STEM major.

- A student with an approved STEM extension receives an additional 30 days of permissible unemployment — a maximum of 120 days of unemployment time during the entire period of regular, post-completion OPT and STEM extension OPT.

- All change-of-address and employment reporting requirements associated with the regular, post-completion OPT are also required during the STEM extension. In addition, a student in an approved period of STEM extension must make mandatory, periodic “validation” reports every six months during the STEM / OPT extension period to the Foreign Student Advisor at the student’s undergraduate
That report must include: full legal name; current mailing and residential address; name and address of the current employer; and the date the student began working for the current employer.

*The OPT STEM extension application packet should include (in this order):*

1. A check for $380.00 made out “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”.
2. The new, completed I-765 form (original), signed in the space between the two lines at the bottom of the page.
3. Copies of pages 1 & 3 of the new I-20AB form from Amherst (check for accuracy) with the STEM extension recommendation noted on page 3, signed by the student and the Amherst official no more than 30 days before receipt at USCIS.
4. A copy of your biographical page from your passport (with expiration date at least 6 months in the future).
5. A copy of your most recent F-1 visa stamp (if applicable, or the visa stamp for the status you entered with if you did not enter in F-1 status). [https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html](https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html)
6. A copy of the front and back of your current I-94 or downloaded copy from web site
7. A copy of your current EAD with the OPT authorized.
8. Two passport-style photographs. Write your name on the back of each photo, put them in an envelope, and mark the envelope with your name and “I-765 application.” For specifics about photos size, see [http://travel.state.gov/passport](http://travel.state.gov/passport).
9. Copy of an official transcript.