



F-1 OPT Extension Instructions

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has passed a new regulation permitting F-1 students in specific circumstances to allow an Optional Practical Training extension. The student must be currently employed or has been offered employment in a job related to his/her major area of study.

17-Month OPT Extension:

The student must have obtained a Bachelor, Master or Doctorate degree in certain STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) fields as defined in SEVIS. The employer must be registered in E-Verify, and agree to report to the Designated School Official in IPS of a student's termination or departure. The student must also agree to provide regular updates to IPS of employment and personal contact information.

The application for extension may be **submitted up to 120 days prior to the current OPT expiration date.** *Students may continue employment while the extension application is pending until a final decision on the I-765 or for 180 days, whichever comes first.*

This extension is given ONCE ONLY. And the extension must be for the entire 17 month period. The expiration date of the OPT extension will be 17 months after the current OPT expiration.

Students cannot exceed 120 days of unemployment during the total 29 months of OPT work authorization.

Automatic Extension for H-1B Applicants:

The second group of F-1 students to qualify for an extension is those who have properly filed or been selected for H-1B processing with a starting date of October 1. **This extension is automatic.** Student must request a new I-20 from IPS with work authorization extension.

For students whose post-completion OPT expired prior to the filing date of the H-1B petition, the students are permitted to legally stay in the U.S. until September 30 unless the H-1B petition for the student is rejected, denied, or withdrawn. However, these students will **NOT** have work authorization.

OPT Extension Application:

1. I-765 Application for Employment Authorization; available for download at www.uscis.gov.
2. \$340.00 check/money order to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security";
3. F-1 OPT Extension Agreement; available for download at www.calstatela.edu/univ/intlstu.
4. F-1 OPT Extension-Employment List; available for download at www.calstatela.edu/univ/intlstu.
5. 2 copies of CSULA diploma;
6. 2 passport photos;
7. 2 copies of previous Employment Authorization Card (front and back);
8. 2 copies of previous I-20 (pages 1 and 3 with OPT recommendation);
9. 2 copies of passport (biographical page);
10. 2 copies of F-1 visa stamp;

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Once all the above documents are obtained, submit them to IPS for review and processing. A new I-20 will be issued to you with the OPT extension recommendation. You will need to return to IPS and sign the new I-20. IPS WILL NOT mail the applications. After signing the I-20, you will be given the entire package for mailing.

H-1B Automatic Extension:

Due to the complexities involved in the cap gap extension, students will receive cap gap extensions in increments depending on which step of the H-1B process they are undergoing.

A student who is the beneficiary of a properly filed H-1B petition will have the OPT extended to June 2, 2008.

Students submit:

- An original statement on company letterhead from the employer that the student is the beneficiary listed on a properly filed H-1B petition (include student's full name and CSULA CIN or date of birth), and*
- Proof of delivery to a USCIS Service Center showing the date of receipt.*

A student who is the beneficiary of a wait listed H-1B petition will have OPT extended to July 28, 2008.

Students submit:

- A copy of the wait list letter from USCIS addressed to the employer.*

A student who is the beneficiary of a receipted H-1B petition will have OPT and F-1 status extended to September 30, 2008.

Students submit:

- A copy of the receipt and/or approval notice.*

Students are responsible for providing the required documents to IPS and requesting a new I-20 with the work authorization extension. The extension will automatically terminate once the H-1B petition has been rejected, denied, or revoked. The student must depart the U.S. or return to full time studies within 60 days upon receiving notice of the rejection, denial or revocation.

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. Who is eligible for the OPT extension?

F-1 students who completed a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree in a STEM field and are currently engaged in post-completion OPT may apply for the STEM extension if they have a job or job offer from an E-Verify employer.

2. What is designated as STEM degrees?

Generally, the fields include: Actuarial Science, Computer Science, Engineering, Engineering Technologies, Biological and Biomedical Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics, Military Technologies, Physical Sciences, Science Technologies and Medical Scientists.

3. Can a student with a dual major qualify for the OPT extension based on one of the degree programs?

Yes, if one of the degrees is on the STEM Designated Degree Program List and any job worked while on the OPT extension is related to the student's STEM degree.

4. Can a student qualify for the OPT extension based on the student's minor?

No.

5. Can a student who has previously earned a degree in a STEM field and has now earned a non-STEM degree apply for the extension?

No. The OPT extension must be based on the same degree as the post-completion OPT.

6. In Item 17 of the Form I-765, what should the student list as the degree?

The student should list the name of the degree as it is shown on the I-20.

7. When does the student's period of OPT extension OPT start?

If the OPT extension is properly filed, the student's period starts the day after the expiration of the student's original period of OPT.

8. Can the student work with an expired employment authorization document while a OPT extension is pending?

Yes. The student may continue employment for up to 180 days while the student's OPT extension application is pending, until the extension is approved, or the application denied or rejected by USDHS.

9. Can the student change employers while the OPT extension application is pending?

Yes. However, if the OPT extension period has started, the employer must also be an E-Verify employer. The student must report the change in employment to his or her DSO.

10. Can the student travel outside the United States if his or her employment authorization document expires and the OPT extension request is pending?

No. The student must wait to receive the new employment authorization document.

11. Termination of OPT extension

Authorization for practical training is automatically terminated when the student transfers to another school or begin study at another educational level. The student cannot reapply for any lost time.

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