

Many Cultures. One Northeastern.

WHO can file for a STEM extension?

An F-1 student who has completed a Bachelor's, Master's or doctoral degree in a STEM field as designated by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and who is currently authorized for Post-completion Optional Practical Training (Post-completion OPT) employment, may apply for the 17-month STEM extension provided that he/she has a job or job offer that is related to the STEM degree and provided that the employer is registered with E-Verify.

WHEN must an F-1 student file for the STEM extension?

Eligible students may apply for the STEM extension as early as 120 days prior to the expiration date of the Post-completion OPT. The application must arrive at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) for adjudication prior to the expiration date of the OPT, however, USCIS recommends that it be filed with them between 90 and 120 days prior to the expiration of the OPT. Check your Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) to find the end date of your employment on Post-completion OPT.

PRIOR TO CONTACTING AN ISSI ADVISOR for a STEM extension

The student should complete the Form I-765, which may be downloaded from www.uscis.gov/graphic/formsfee/forms/index.htm. The Form I-765 should be completed and signed in blue ink. Please refer to ISSI Form 209, which appears with the OPT instructions (www.neu.edu/issi) for directions on completing this form. Additionally, be sure to complete the questions related specifically to the STEM extension as explained below:

- (1) : For item number 16, the code for eligibility category should be entered as “(c) (3) (C);”
- (2) For item number 17
 - (a) enter your degree (“Master of Science in...”, etc. as it appears on your Form I-20)
 - (b) enter the name of the E-Verify employer; and the employer’s E-Verify number.
 - (c) 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) (ISSI Advisor) must annotate this on the Form I-20, page 3, and you will note this in Item No. 17 as well in the space next to the degree.
- (3) Contact an ISSI Advisor by telephone at the ISSI (617-373-2310) and/or make an appointment to meet with an ISSI Advisor who will review your documentation and issue you a STEM extension I-20. Students who reside at a distance from the University or who cannot come to the ISSI due to work obligations may complete this process through a telephone appointment, email, fax, and mail.
- (4) You may also wish to assemble the documents listed below under “Documents to Mail to USCIS” prior to your appointment if you would like to review them with the ISSI Advisor. The documents that you will be mailing to USCIS are almost the same as the set of documents that you submitted to USCIS for your Post-completion OPT with the addition of a copy of your Employment Authorization Card for your Post-completion OPT and proof of your degree.

DOCUMENTS TO MAIL TO USCIS after the ISSI has issued your new I-20 with a recommendation for the 17-month STEM Extension

- Form I-765 (original).
- Check or money order for \$340 payable to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.
- Photocopy of Form I-94 (front and back).
- Photocopy of the new I-20 signed and dated with the recommendation for OPT on page 3.
- Photocopy of all previous I-20(s).
- Photocopy of previous Employment Authorization Card(s) (EAC).



- Two “full-frontal color passport style” photos are required. Follow the photo instructions given on the Department of State website at <http://www.travel.state.gov/passport/pptphotos/index.html> (see “Composition Checklist”/“Frequently Asked Question”). Print your name legibly on back of each photo.
- Photocopy of the biographical page of the passport.
- Photocopy of your most recent visa stamp.
- Proof of your degree (one of the following: photocopy of diploma or official transcript or unofficial transcript)
- NSEERS (National Security Entry-Exit Registration System) registrants must include proof of special registration (consult an ISSI advisor for details). (if applicable)

Mail the above items by Certified Mail with return receipt to the USCIS service center that has jurisdiction over your district of residence as indicated on your form I-765. A complete list of USCIS service centers is available at www.uscis.gov under “Forms” on the “Instructions for Form I-765” or you may consult with an international student advisor at the ISSI for further information. If you reside in Massachusetts, send your application to:

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Vermont Service Center
75 Lower Welden Street
St. Albans, VT 05479

What happens while the STEM extension is pending at USCIS?

The period of the STEM extension OPT starts the day after the expiration of a student’s original period of Post-completion OPT. While a student’s STEM application is pending, that student may work for up to 180 days (6 months) even if their original Employment Authorization Card for Post-completion OPT has expired. The following Codes 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 provided that your application has arrived at USCIS prior to the expiration date of your Post-completion OPT.

Processing Period for a STEM Extension and Receipt Notice (Form I-797)

A Form I-765 is usually adjudicated by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service between 60 and 90 days. Within approximately fifteen days of receipt of your application for a STEM extension, you should receive Form I-797, a confirmation of receipt of your application and the filing fee. Form I-797 bears a case number that will enable you to track the progress of your application online at the USCIS homepage.

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

A student may travel outside the U.S. while the STEM extension is pending provided that their Employment Authorization Card for their Post-completion OPT will still be valid upon the date of re-entry to the U.S. If the Employment Authorization Card for the Post-completion OPT has expired or will expire prior to the date of the student’s re-entry to the U.S., the student SHOULD NOT travel abroad until they receive their new Employment Authorization Card.

WHAT ARE A STUDENT’S RESPONSIBILITIES while on a STEM extension?

A student authorized for a STEM extension must:

- (a) work in a paid 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 work in a paid position for any employer that is not an E-Verify employer;

(d) NOT be *unemployed* for more than 120 days during the entire period of the Post-Completion OPT and the STEM extension OPT combined. The days of unemployment will count from the *start date of Employment Authorization Card for the Post-completion OPT*

(e) The student is required to report to the DSO within 10 days any change in the following:

-change to legal name

-change in residential or mailing address

-change in email

-change in employer's name

-change in employer's address

-loss of employment (the student must inform the employer that they are required to notify the ISSI within 48 hours of the student's termination of employment)

(f) 6-month validation report (see below)

6-MONTH VALIDATION REPORT

A student on a STEM extension is required to provide a ***6-Month Validation Report*** to the ISSI Advisor (DSO) every six months during the STEM extension starting from the date of the first 6-month interval of the STEM extension and every 6 months thereafter until the F-1 status ends or the STEM extension ends, whichever is first. The Validation Report to the ISSI is may be submitted 15 days prior to each reporting date and must include:

(a) full legal name

(b) current residential and mailing address

(c) name and address of current employer;

(d) date student started working for the current employer;

IMPORTANT: Failure to complete the 6-Month Validation Report to the ISSI will result in automatic termination of the student's SEVIS record and employment authorization by SEVIS 32 days after the required reporting date. **IT IS STRONGLY SUGGESTED THAT YOU MAKE YOUR 6-MONTH VALIDATION REPORT EARLY.**

Can a student change employers while the STEM application is pending?

Yes, a student may change employers, but if the STEM period has started, the new employer must be an

E-Verify Employer. The student must report the change of employer to the ISSI.

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) within 48 hours:

(a) that the student is no longer employed;

(b) provide the student's name;

(c) provide the student's SEVIS ID number; and

(d) provide the date that the student's employment ended.