

ELIGIBILITY FOR STEM OPT

This new rule effective April 8, 2008 makes recipients of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees in certain STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) fields eligible for a one-time 17-month extension of post-completion OPT (for a total eligibility of up to 29 months). In addition, to be eligible for STEM OPT your employer must be registered in E-Verify*, and agree to report to ISSS when your employment ends or is terminated. You must agree to make periodic reports to ISSS regarding your employment. Employment must be directly related to the major area of study.

ISSS facilitates the STEM OPT application process, but final authorization is processed by USCIS (Immigration). It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the application is submitted at least three months prior to their current OPT end date.

*Note: There is no public list of employers enrolled in E-Verify.

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Compile the following STEM OPT documents to submit to your International Student Adviser at least 3 months before your standard OPT end date:
 - o OPT STEM Extension document signed by student and employer below.
 - o \$340 check or money order payable to Department of Homeland Security (fee as of 07/30/2007)
 - o 2 Passport-style photos
 - o Form I-765 with completed section 17.
 - a. List the degree as it is shown on your I-20 which should match your transcripts and diploma
 - b. List employer's name as listed in E-Verify and E-Verify number
 - o Copy of transcripts or diploma; I-94 card (front and back); Passport I.D. page(s) including expiration date; Visa Stamp; previous EAD cards
2. Once the above information is received by ISSS, your International Student Adviser will review your application materials, issue a new I-20 with STEM OPT recommendation, and finalize your STEM OPT Application Package.
3. You must mail the completed OPT application packet to Immigration (USCIS) **WITHIN 30 DAYS OF OPT I-20 ISSUANCE** to an address below:

<u>Address for Regular Postal Mail</u>	<u>Address for Express Mail</u> (i.e. FedEx, UPS)
USCIS, Texas Service Center	USCIS, Texas Service Center
Attention: I-765 Unit	Attention: I-765 Unit
P.O. Box 851041	4141 North St. Augustine Rd.
Mesquite, TX 75185-1041	Dallas, TX 75227
	Phone: 1-800-375-5283

STEM OPT HOURS & LIMITATIONS

- Employment on STEM OPT must be with an E-Verify employer, related to your major area of study and commensurate with your educational level.
- You may continue working with an expired EAD while your STEM extension is pending for up to 180 days.
- You may NOT accrue more than 120 days of unemployment during your 29 months of total OPT.
- You may change employers while on the STEM extension, but the employer must also be an E-Verify employer.
- You must report any changes of employment to ISSS via: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/iss/OPTEmployerInfo.html>
- You cannot travel outside the U.S. while your STEM extension is pending.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY

By signing below, I agree to the following:

1. To work in a paid position related to the STEM degree for an E-Verify employer at least 20 hours per week
2. Report to ISSS within 10 days of any legal name change, change in residential address, changes in employer or loss of employment.
3. To send ISSS a validation report via the online OPT Employer Information form, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/iss/OPTEmployerInfo.html>, every 6 months starting from the date the STEM extension starts.
4. Will not accrue more than 120 days of unemployment time during the entire period of OPT (including standard and STEM OPT).

Student Signature

Student Printed Name

Date

EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITY

By signing below as the above listed student's employer, I agree to notify the Vanderbilt University ISSS office via the online form, E-Verify Employment Termination, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/iss/employmentTermination.html> if the above student's employment is terminated with the company.

Employer Signature

Employer's Printed Name

Date