WHAT IS A 17-MONTH EXTENSION OPT?
Practical work experience authorization that extends OPT for another 17 months for those who have earned a degree in a field included on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) list of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR THE 17-MONTH EXTENSION OPT?
• An F-1 student who has been approved for and is currently engaged in post-completion OPT and
• Has earned a degree in a field included on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) list of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields and
• Are employed in a job directly related to his/her field of study and
• Are working for or will join an employer that is enrolled in the U.S. Government’s E-Verify program.

NOTE: All four above criteria must be met for a student to be eligible for the 17-Month Extension OPT.

IS MY DEGREE IN A STEM FIELD?
Please refer to the list of all MSU majors that correspond to the official list of STEM fields. If a student earned a degree under one of these majors, he/she may be eligible for the 17-month extension. The list may be viewed here: http://www.ice.gov/sevis/stemlist.htm or come to OISS and speak with an advisor to determine if you are STEM eligible.

WHAT IS E-VERIFY?
E-Verify is a database system administered by DHS in partnership with the Social Security Administration. It allows participating employers to electronically verify the employment eligibility of newly-hired employees. For more information visit: www.dhs.gov/e-verify.

WHEN SHOULD ONE APPLY FOR THE 17-MONTH OPT EXTENSION?
Students must apply for the 17-month extension OPT; prior to the expiration of 12 months of “regular” OPT. We recommend filing of extension four months prior to 12 month OPT expiration. The application must be received by USCIS prior to the expiration date of the first OPT period in order to be properly (timely) filed.

WHAT HAPPENS WHILE THE APPLICATION IS PENDING?
If the application for the 17-month extension is successfully received prior to the expiration of the first OPTS period, students may continue employment until the application is processed or until 180 days have passed, whichever is sooner.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS DURING THE 17-MONTH EXTENSION
Students approved for the 17-month extension have additional reporting requirements in order to maintain their status and work authorization.

• Students must report to the MSU OISS within 10 days if there is any change of:
  o Legal name
  o Residential or mailing address
  o Employer name
  o Employer address, and/or
  o Loss of employment
• Students must make a validation report to the MSU OISS every six months (regardless of whether or not there have been any changes) to confirm name and address, employer name and address, and continuation of employment. The report is due within 10 days of the six-month reporting date. (See page 6 for more details on reporting requirements)
LIMITATIONS ON UNEMPLOYMENT

Students approved for the 17-month extension may not accrue more than 120 days of unemployment during the total 29-month period of OPT. Employment must be related to the field of study in order to qualify. Employment can be paid or unpaid.

NOTE: Self-employment and volunteer positions will not qualify as valid employment for OPT purposes during the 17-month extension.

17-MONTH EXTENSION ONLY AVAILABLE ONCE

The 17-month extension of OPT is only available once to each student. A student who is approved for a 17-month extension OPT can never apply for it again. Note that this rule is different from the application rules for the “regular” 12-month OPT, under which students could be approved for multiple OPT periods for each higher degree earned in the U.S. (i.e. bachelor’s, then master’s, then doctoral).

CHANGING EMPLOYER DURING 17-MONTH EXTENSION

Changing employer during the 17-month extension is permitted as long as it is an E-Verified employer and employer information must be reported to OISS within 10 days of new employment.

STARTING AND ENDING DATES

The start date of the 17-month extension will be automatically set to the day after the expiration of the current 12-month OPT authorization. The end date will be 17 months later. It is not possible to request smaller increments of time for the OPT extension.

COLOR PHOTOGRAPH SPECIFICATIONS

All photos must be of the applicant only and must be identical. All photos must meet the specifications for full frontal/passport photos and must be no more than 30 days old when an application is filed. (See figure and specifications below)

WHERE TO GET PHOTOS:

A few possible options:

On Campus: Contact University Relations, 311 Olds Hall, at 517-355-7505 or email photos@ur.msu.edu to set up an appointment. Hours of availability are 8am-5pm.

Off Campus: U.S. Post Office, 1140 Abbot Rd., East Lansing or local U.S. Post Office
FedEx Office, 626 Michigan Ave., East Lansing or local FedEx Office

PASSPORT PHOTO REQUIREMENTS:

• Photos must be 2 inches in height by 2 inches in width (see figure below).
• The photos must be in color with full face, frontal view on a white to off-white background.
• Head height should measure 1 inch to 1 3/8 inches from top to bottom of chin.
• Eye height is between 1 1/8 inch to 1 3/8 inches from bottom of photo (see figure below).
• Head must be bare unless a headdress is required by religious order of which you are a member.
1. Assemble the following documents. If you are located within a reasonable distance of MSU, please meet with an OISS advisor during walk-in advising hours (Mon-Fri, 1pm-3pm) or schedule an appointment. If you are located far away from MSU, please send OISS copies of all of the following documents either via email attachment to oiss@msu.edu or via fax to 517-355-4657. (Incomplete submissions cannot be processed.)

- Photocopy of the front and back of your current Employment Authorization Document (EAD card; also called OPT card).
- Photocopy of your MSU diploma or official MSU transcript showing your conferred degree.
- Printout of the electronic I-94 screen at from CBP website or photocopy of both sides of your I-94 card.
- Photocopy of the picture page / expiration date of your passport.

   **NOTE:** the answer for #16 is (c)(3)(C). The answer for #17 under “Degree” is the CIP number located on the last page of your I-20 in the upper left-hand corner on the “Primary Major” line. Please obtain E-Verify information from your employer.

   - Two full frontal / passport-style photos (see example attached) taken within the past 30 days. Gently print your name and SEVIS ID number (located on the top right corner above the bar code on your I-20) on the back of your pictures.

   - $380.00 personal check, cashier’s check or money order made payable to: “Department of Homeland Security.”

2. OISS will prepare a new I-20 for you. In most cases your I-20 will be ready in 3-5 business days. We will notify you via your MSU email once it is ready. If you are located close to MSU, you may come to the office to pick up your new I-20. If you are located far away from MSU, you may authorize a friend to pick up your I-20 or we can send it to you either via regular mail at no charge or via FedEx shipping if you provide us with your address, telephone number, and credit card information to pay for shipping charges.

3. Checklist for Mailing your Application to USCIS:

   - Photocopy of all pages of your new I-20 endorsed for the 17-month OPT extension. (Do not send the original.) Make sure to sign and date your new I-20 before you make the photocopy.
   - Completed I-765 form.
   - Completed G-1145 form.
   - Photocopy of the front and back of your current EAD card (also called OPT card).
   - Photocopy of your MSU diploma or official MSU transcript.
   - Printout of the electronic I-94 screen at from CBP website or photocopy of both sides of your I-94 card.
   - Photocopy of the picture page / expiration date of your passport.
   - Two full frontal / passport-style photos (see attached example) taken within the past 30 days. Gently print your name and SEVIS ID number (located on the top right corner above the bar code on your I-20) on the back of the pictures.
   - $380.00 personal check, cashier’s check or money order made payable to: Department of Homeland Security.”

4. How to Mail:

   We recommend using either USPS Certified Mail (OISS will provide a pre-addressed envelope) or a courier service (FedEx, DHL, UPS etc) to mail your OPT application to USCIS so you have proof of delivery. Certified mail is cheaper but slower, courier service is faster, but more expensive. Courier service will only speed up your application process by a few days. The address you use on the I-765 determines where you should send your application (see next page). **NOTE:** USCIS must receive your completed I-765 STEM application prior to the end
5. **RECEIPT NOTICE:**
If you include a completed Form G-1145, USCIS is supposed to notify you within 48 hours of accepting your immigration form(s) via email and/or cell phone number. The message will provide a receipt number as information but will not constitute official notice of acceptance. The email notice will also provide a brief statement on how to get additional information about the status of your case. The email or text message does not grant any immigration status or benefit. You may not present a copy of the email or text message as evidence that USCIS has granted you any immigration status or benefit. Approximately 4-6 weeks after your application is mailed, you will receive a paper copy Receipt Notice from USCIS. This is your proof of application. It will state when your application was received and give you a receipt number. You can use the receipt number, located on your receipt notice, to check your application status at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) (left column titled “CASE STATUS”).

**NOTE:** If you receive OISS email for document pick up, please come in or call us immediately. USCIS requests can be time sensitive.

6. **17-MONTH EXTENSION APPROVAL:**
Approximately 90 days after your application is received, you will receive your EAD card (Employment Authorization Document), also called an OPT card. This is your approval. Once you have your EAD card and the start date has been reached, you may begin employment. **NOTE:** If you do not use the OISS address as your OPT mailing address, you must provide OISS with a photocopy of your EAD card immediately after you receive it.

7. If you successfully file the application for your 17-month extension prior to the expiration of your current 12-month OPT period, you may continue employment *even if your previous EAD card is expired* until your OPT extension is processed or until 180 days has passed, whichever is sooner.

8. If your 17-month extension is approved, you must send a photocopy of your new EAD card to OISS.

9. Please see “MAINTAINING YOUR STATUS DURING THE 17-MONTH EXTENSION” for more details on how to meet the requirements for properly maintaining your F-1 visa status.
**NOTE:** The below addresses correlate to the address that you fill on your I-765 form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you live in:</th>
<th>Mail your application to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan,</td>
<td><strong>USCIS Phoenix Lockbox</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah,</td>
<td><em>For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries:</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Guam, or the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands.</td>
<td>USCIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PO Box 21281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phoenix, AZ 85036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR</td>
<td><strong>For Express mail and courier deliveries:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USCIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attn: AOS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suite 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phoenix, AZ 85034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky,</td>
<td><strong>USCIS Dallas Lockbox</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico,</td>
<td><em>For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Deliveries:</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Oklahoma,</td>
<td>USCIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, U.S. Virgin Islands, or West Virginia</td>
<td>PO Box 660867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dallas, TX 75266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR</td>
<td><strong>For Express mail and courier deliveries:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USCIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attn: AOS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suite 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lewisville, TX 75067</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MAINTAINING YOUR STATUS DURING THE 17-MONTH EXTENSION

Information reporting requirements are stricter during the special 17-month extension. Take special care to comply with these obligations. Failure to do so can jeopardize the validity of your 17-month extension and your legal visa status in the U.S.

1. You **must** report any change of address to MSU via the Registrar’s website within 10 days of moving to your new residence. Your address must describe where you live. It cannot be a P.O. Box or an office address. To update your address, go to [www.reg.msu.edu](http://www.reg.msu.edu) and click on “Address Changes.”

2. You **must** report any change in your legal name to OISS within 10 days of the change. If your name changes, please send a photocopy of your new or updated passport via email attachment to [oiss@msu.edu](mailto:oiss@msu.edu) or via fax to 517-355-4657.

3. If the name or address of your employer changes, you **must** report this information to OISS within 10 days of the change. You can report via email to oiss@msu.edu.

4. If you experience an interruption in employment, you **must** report it to OISS. You can report via email to oiss@msu.edu.

5. **You are required to make a validation report to OISS every six months** (regardless of whether or not there have been any changes) starting from the date your 17-month extension is approved. The report is due within 10 days of the required reporting date. The validation report must be sent via email to oiss@msu.edu and must contain the following information:
   - Legal name
   - Residential / mailing address
   - Employer name
   - Employer address
   - Confirmation that you are currently employed by the employer named

TRAVEL DURING 17-MONTH EXTENSION:
Travel outside the U.S. during 17-month extension can be risky. Please consult with an OISS advisor if you plan to travel during 17-month extension. To re-enter the U.S. during the 17-month extension; you will need the following original documents:
   - Valid passport (make sure it is valid at least 6 months into the future at time of re-entry)
   - Valid F-1 visa stamp
   - I-20 endorsed for 17-month extension with a travel signature less than 6 months old
   - Unexpired 17-month extension EAD card
   - Confirmation of employment letter from your U.S. E-Verified employer

**NOTE:** If you have an expired F-1 visa and you plan to make a short trip to Canada, Mexico, or adjacent (Caribbean) islands, please consult an OISS advisor or visit our page on Automatic Revalidation: [http://www.oiss.msu.edu/students_travel_autorevalid.php](http://www.oiss.msu.edu/students_travel_autorevalid.php)

ENDING YOUR 17-MONTH EXTENSION:
Your F-1 status remains valid until 60 days after the expiration of your EAD card. During this 60-day grace period, you are no longer authorized to work, however you may legally stay in the U.S. If you depart the U.S. during the 60-day grace period, you are no longer eligible to re-enter under your previous F-1 visa status.
   - If you plan to return home after the end of your 17-month extension, please make sure that you depart the U.S. before the end of your 60-day grace period.
   - If you plan to change your visa status, we recommend you begin this process before your 17-month extension is expired.
   - If you plan to start a new degree program at another college or university, please make sure to contact OISS regarding the transfer of your SEVIS record. Transfers must be done before the end of the 60-day grace period.