



## **OPT 17-Month Extension Fact Sheet**

### Changing Employers on a 17-month Extension

A student may change employers during the 17 month extension. However, you are advised against changing employers while the I-765 is pending, since the I-765 names a specific employer.

Note: Students are advised to consult with an attorney regarding the effect of changing to an employer that is not the employer named on the I-765.

The student must report the change in employer to International Education & Programs (IEP), and IEP staff will update SEVIS accordingly.

Students may NOT be concurrently employed at a non-E-verify employer. While on a 17-month extension, the student is only allowed to be employed by employers who are registered with E-verify.

### Unemployment

Students granted a 17-month OPT extension may not accrue a total of more than 120 days of unemployment during the total 29-month OPT period, effective April 8, 2008. More than 120 days of unemployment after April 8, 2008 may affect eligibility for future US immigration benefits. The application could be denied because of the unemployment. A student may provide documentation for the adjudicator to consider any extenuating circumstances.

Students authorized an OPT STEM extension must work at least a minimum average of 20 hours per week for an E-Verify employer in a position directly related to the student's STEM degree. STEM students may work multiple jobs, but all the employers must be enrolled in E-Verify.

Students on a STEM extension are allowed to volunteer, incidental to their status. This means that volunteer work is allowed but does not count as employment for the purpose of maintaining F-1 status.

It is recommended that students maintain evidence — for each job — of the position held, proof of the duration of that position, the job title, contact information for the student's supervisor or manager, and a description of the work.

If it is not clear from the job description that the work is related to the student's degree, it is highly recommended that the student obtain a signed letter from the employer's hiring official, supervisor, or manager stating how the student's degree is related to the work performed.

### Expiry of Current EAD Card While 17-Month STEM Extension Application is Pending

Provided that the student has submitted a timely and correctly filed application for a 17-Month STEM Extension to the USCIS Processing Center, if the student has not received notice of the



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approval of the STEM extension application before the current EAD card's expiration date, the student's EAD card is extended automatically pursuant to the terms and conditions specified in

8 CFR 274a.12(b)(6)(iv). This means that the expired card will remain valid until USCIS makes a decision on the extension application or for a period not to exceed 180 days.

#### Travel

A person who has applied for a 17-month OPT STEM extension, whose current EAD card has expired, cannot travel outside the United States, even if employed, until the new EAD card is received.

If the student whose approved period of OPT has started travels outside of the United States while unemployed, the time spent outside the United States will count as unemployment against the 120-day limit.

If a student travels while employed either during a period of leave authorized by an employer or as part of their employment, the time spent outside the United States will not count as unemployment.

#### Student responsibilities while on STEM extension OPT

Students pursuing a period of STEM extension OPT must:

- Work in a paid position for an E-Verify employer a minimum average of 20 hrs per week
- Work in a position related to the STEM degree
- Report to the International Education & Programs office within 10 days of:
  - Legal name changes
  - A change in residential or mailing address
  - Changes in employer, giving the employer name and employer address
  - Loss of employment
- Send to the International Education & Programs office a validation report every six months starting from the date the STEM extension starts and ending when the student's F-1 status ends or the STEM extension ends, whichever is first. The validation report must include the student's:
  - Full legal name
  - SEVIS identification number
  - Current mailing and residential address
  - Name and address of the current employer
  - Date the student began working for the current employer
- Students pursuing a period of STEM extension OPT must **not**:
  - Work in a paid position for any employer that is not an E-Verify employer
  - Have more than 120 days of unemployment time during the entire period of post-completion OPT (regular post-completion OPT and STEM extension OPT).