

Optional Practical Training

MSUM International Student Services,
CMU 229, (218)-477-2956



Eligibility for 24-month STEM OPT Extension

- The 17-month extension is only possible one time per lifetime; a student is NOT eligible to receive an extension more than once, regardless of degree level.
- The extension can only be granted in one 24 month period; the period cannot be “split” into 2 periods.
- Students on “pre-completion” OPT will NOT be eligible for the extension
 - For a student who applied for “pre-completion” OPT after finishing all course requirements but before being conferred the degree, and then continued the OPT after the program end date, SEVP will consider for a limited time allowing a data fix of the program end date so that these students will be considered “post-completion” in SEVIS.
- USCIS will determine whether a student’s degree is eligible for the STEM extension by ensuring that the CIP code listed on the I-765 and/or the I-20 is one of the fields listed in the DHS STEM list.
 - When asked to list the degree in item #28 of the Form I-765, the student should list the major as it appears in SEVIS and on the I-20 (i.e. the name associated with the eligible CIP code), not the name used by the institution.
 - Note: the I-20 only lists the primary major. If the STEM major is the student’s secondary major:
 - DSO should handwrite on the I-20 “*Secondary major CIP code: (list CIP code), (title of major as it appears in SEVIS)*”
 - Student needs to include documentation of the major that relates to the CIP code which qualifies the individual for the extension.
- Since the employment must directly relate to the STEM field, it is recommended that the student include a statement from the employer regarding how the employment relates to the STEM field.
- The student does not need to provide any documentation that an employer is an E-Verify employer; the only thing required for the I-765 is the employer’s E-Verify number and name as listed in E-Verify.
- There has been some confusion surrounding a statement in the supplementary information to the rule that “only new hires can be verified in E-Verify once an employer registers with the program.” USCIS confirmed that this does not mean that a current OPT employer would have to “fire and re-hire” a student employee, but just that the student would not have to be “verified” again through E-verify, as long as the employer follows the normal I-9 obligations.

Applying for the 24-month STEM OPT Extension

- The student should file the I-765 with the USCIS Service Center with jurisdiction over the address **where the student currently resides**, not where the first I-765 for regular OPT was filed.
- A student may apply for the 24-month STEM OPT 90 days prior or during the regular period of post-completion OPT up to the expiration date of the student’s current OPT employment authorization. Students are encouraged to file early so that they receive the new EAD before the end of the regular period of post-completion OPT.

Required Documents below to be emailed to:

Minnesota State University Moorhead
International Student Services
1104 7th Avenue South
Moorhead MN 56563

- I-765 Form complete fully should be typed as a fillable PDF and signed in BLUE ink
 - Number 27 is indicated as (c) (3) (C)
 - 28 must indicate your degree as on I-20
 - Employers Names as E-Verify:
 - Company E-Verify Number
- Copy all previous EADs (Work Authorization Cards)
- Two current (less than 30 days) passport style color photos with name, date of birth and SEVIS ID printed in pencil on the back. http://travel.state.gov/visa/visaphotoreq/photoexamples/photoexamples_5331.html
- \$410 filing fee, make a check or money order payable to “*U.S. Department of Homeland Security*”. check must be current or fill in the form for credit card use on USCIS Forms Date on

- Employment verification letter

Sample Employment Verification Letter - Original employment letter must contain the following information:

Job title

Detailed job description

Start date of employment (the actual start date of your employment with the company, not the OPT extension start date. If the start date on your employment letter is different from what you previously reported to us, your OPT extension will not be processed until the discrepancy is clarified in writing by your employer.

Confirm: this job is DIRECTLY related to student’s degree (specify their major) obtained from Minnesota State University Moorhead

Salary

Confirm the employer is an E-verify employer (this information is listed on the I-765 form section 17)

This letter must be dated and signed by the employer, and printed on a company letterhead!

- Copy of Minnesota State University Moorhead diploma
- Copy of Minnesota State University Moorhead transcript
- Copy of I-94 printed from electronic I94 website
- Color Copy of passport: information page with expiration date and stamp of first entry into the U.S. in F1 status – Must Be a Valid Passport
- Color Copy of F-1 visa
- I-983 filled in by employer
- Copy of I-20 with the OPT extension requested. This will be done by the International Student Services Office once the above documents are scanned and emailed to office.