



Carnegie Mellon University  
5000 Forbes Avenue  
Warner Hall, Third Floor  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
Tel: 412.268.5231  
Fax: 412.268.7832

www.cmu.edu/oie  
Students & Scholars: oie@andrew.cmu.edu  
Study Abroad: goabroad@andrew.cmu.edu

## **17-Month Optional Practical Training Extension** **For STEM-Designated Degree-holders**

This handout explains the seventeen (17) month extension period of Optional Practical Training (OPT) for which some students, with degrees in a designated-STEM program, are eligible.

### **Eligibility**

1. Your most recent degree, the degree for which you were authorized 12 months of OPT, must be a bachelor's, master's or Ph.D. degree in a designated STEM field. A list of CMU STEM degrees can be found at: [www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/oie/news/200800505.html](http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/oie/news/200800505.html).
2. You must be authorized for your initial 12-month period of OPT and apply for the 17-month extension before your initial 12-month period of OPT ends.
3. You must have a job or job offer that is **directly related to your most recent major field of study**.
4. Your employer must participate in the E-Verify program. You will have to obtain your employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or a valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number in order to apply for the 17-month extension. Details about the E-Verify program can be found online at: [www.dhs.gov/E-Verify](http://www.dhs.gov/E-Verify). Questions about E-Verify should be directed to your employer.
5. **YOU MUST SUBMIT YOUR OPT APPLICATION TO USCIS WITHIN 30 DAYS OF AN OIE ADVISOR'S OPT RECOMMENDATION IN SEVIS**, and you must make a timely application before your 12-month OPT ends. It is recommended that you 90 days prior to the end date of the initial OPT. If you do not file within 30 days of the OIE recommendation you will have to contact OIE for a new I-20. The fee to replace the I-20 with a new date is \$50, payable by check or money order to Carnegie Mellon University.
6. Your employer must agree to notify OIE within 48 hours if you lose your job or stop working.
7. You must comply with additional reporting requirements related to your name, address and employer information. (See page 3 of this handout for details.)
8. You remain on CMU's I-20 until the end of your OPT and 60 day grace period. If you travel, you may need to mail your I-20 to OIE for travel signatures.

### **Conditions and Limitations**

1. 17-month extension OPT will begin the day after the initial 12-month period of OPT ends and will end 17 months later.
2. Only one 17-month extension is allowed.
3. If the application has been timely filed, you can continue to work while the application is being processed, even if you do not receive your new EAD before the end of your initial 12-month period of OPT.
4. Failure to comply with reporting requirements will result in the loss of your immigration status and employment authorization. **YOU MUST PAY ATTENTION TO AND COMPLY WITH REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES.**
5. Unemployment is limited to 120 days (time accrued in the aggregate during the entire 29-month OPT period).

### **Application Process**

You must make a timely application to USCIS in order to continue working and obtain the 17-month OPT extension. To apply, follow these steps:

#### **STEP 1: Be Informed**

Read this handout thoroughly and carefully.

#### **STEP 2: Obtain the OIE Recommendation and new I-20**

Complete the 17-Month STEM OPT Extension Request Form and submit it to OIE no more than 100 days prior to the end of your initial OPT period. You, not your employer or company attorney must submit

this form. Carefully follow the instructions on the Request Form to avoid processing delays. Allow one week (plus mailing time, if applicable) for OIE to process your request and prepare the new I-20.

**STEP 3: Complete the USCIS Application Materials**

You will need to gather the following application materials and submit them in this order to USCIS to apply for the 17-month OPT extension.

HERE IS WHAT YOU MUST SEND TO USCIS:

- A \$340 check or money order payable to “Department of Homeland Security.”
- Original I-765 form completed by you with your original signature (in blue ink) – use the most current version available from the “Immigration Forms” section of the USCIS website since older versions are not acceptable (<http://www.uscis.gov>). Note that the address you use must be valid for at least 3 months from the time you send the application. The US Postal Service DOES NOT forward EAD cards.
- Enter the correct code on the I-765 form: **17 month STEM extension (c)(3)(C)**
- Cover letter/checklist explaining that you are applying for the 17-month STEM OPT extension and listing the contents of the mailing.
- Photocopy (NOT original) of new SEVIS I-20 with the OPT recommendation from OIE Advisor on page 3.** You must obtain your new I-20 from OIE with the 17-month OPT recommendation before you can proceed with this application. NOTE: sign the I-20 before copying it; all I-20 copies must be signed.
- Photocopies of all previously issued I-20 documents dating back to beginning of F-1 status. Fee for any copies that OIE makes of your old I-20s is \$50, payable by check or money order to Carnegie Mellon University.
- Proof of degree: official transcript, unofficial transcript or copy of the diploma showing the level and program of study.
- Photocopy of I-94 (front and back).
- Photocopy of the most recent I.D. page(s) of your passport (these are the page(s) which contain the picture, number, and expiration date).
- Photocopy of the most recent US visa stamp (in a page of your passport).
- Two “passport” photos. More details about can be found at: [www.travel.state.gov/passport/pptphotos/index.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/passport/pptphotos/index.html). In pencil, print your name and write your admission number (I-94#) on the back of each photo. Passport photos can be obtained at many US Post Offices, FedEx/Kinkos offices, and many retailers such as Walmart and Target.
- Copy of a previously issued EAD card.

**STEP 4: Mail the Application Pack to USCIS**

When you have completed the entire application, make a complete set of photocopies for your files, organize the materials in the order listed above and send the entire application to USCIS to complete the authorization procedure. **DO NOT USE THE e-FILING PROCEDURE**—it slows the application process.

Mail the application to one of four USCIS Service Centers: Vermont, Nebraska, Texas or California. **YOU** must mail the application to the Service Center that has jurisdiction over the address you have used on the I-765. We recommend that you send the application via an express mail carrier or via US registered mail “return-receipt requested” so that you have proof of delivery. See chart below.

Mail the application so USCIS receives it before the application deadlines:

1. Within 30 days of the OIE recommendation (the date in item 10 on the I-20) AND
2. Before the end of your current OPT period, ideally 90 days prior to the OPT end date.

If you used a mailing address in:	Mail to this Service Center
CT, DE, the District of Columbia, ME, MD, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, Puerto Rico, RI, VT, VA, WV, US Virgin Islands	USCIS Vermont Service Center ATTN: I-765 75 Lower Welden Street St. Albans, VT 04579-0001

AR, AL, GA, FL, LA, KY, MS, NM, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX	USCIS Texas Service Center P.O. Box 851041 Mesquite, TX 75185-1041 (See <a href="http://www.uscis.gov">http://www.uscis.gov</a> for address for courier services)
AZ, CA, Guam, HI, NV	USCIS California Service Center 24000 Avila Road 2nd Floor, Room 2312 Laguna Niguel, CA 92677
AK, CO, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, MT, NE, ND, OH, OR, SD, UT, WA, WI, WY	USCIS Nebraska Service Center P.O. Box 87765 Lincoln, NE 68501-7765 (See <a href="http://www.uscis.gov">http://www.uscis.gov</a> for address for courier services)

### **STEP 5: Wait For the EAD**

Within one month of sending the application to the USCIS, you should get a standard receipt notice. If you do not get this letter within 6 weeks contact an OIE advisor for more information. The “Receipt Number” in the top left corner of this receipt notice can be used to check the status of your case on the USCIS website at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) or by calling the phone number indicated on the receipt. Keep in mind that this information is updated infrequently.

### **Other Important Information**

#### **A. Making a Decision Regarding Participation in OPT**

- **Only one 17-month extension period of OPT is available during your US studies.** If you earn multiple STEM degrees or leave the US and re-enter as an F-1 student in the future, you will not be eligible for an additional 17-month extension. However, if you earn a higher degree, you would still be eligible for the initial 12 month period of OPT if you have not previously been authorized OPT for that degree level.

#### **B. Reporting Requirements and Limitations on Unemployment**

- **F-1 regulations REQUIRE you to report any change of your name, your address, your employer’s name or your employer’s address, as well as any interruption or loss of employment, within 10 days to OIE.** Report address changes, name changes and employment interruptions or changes to OIE by email at [oie@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:oie@andrew.cmu.edu), and this information will be reported to the Department of Homeland Security, as required in the immigration regulations.
- **Additionally you must report to OIE every 6 months, within 10 business days, to confirm that the employer information you submitted with this request is still correct.** The 6-month reports begin the day your 17-month OPT extension starts. After that, they continue every 6 months until your OPT ends, or you change status or depart the US.
- As regulations may change, **OIE must also have your current email address** in order to contact you quickly.
- **Periods of “unemployment” are limited to 120 days while on OPT.** It is unclear how this provision of the OPT regulations will be applied or enforced. Students have always been expected to be either working full-time or looking for full-time employment in a job directly related to their major field of study; now, immigration authorities may be taking a closer look at whether or not students ARE working and if the job is directly related to the major when students apply for future immigration benefits.
- **You must report status changes to OIE ([oie@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:oie@andrew.cmu.edu)) while you are on OPT.** For instance, you must notify OIE if you:
  - Apply for and are granted a change of status from F-1 (OPT) to H-1B or any other status.
  - If you leave the US and make a new entry in another status or
  - If you leave the US permanently before the end date of your or
  - If you plan to return to CMU as a student or continue studies elsewhere after OPT.

Report changes to OIE by email at [oie@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:oie@andrew.cmu.edu).

- C. **Authorization may not be rescinded.** Once authorization to engage in OPT is granted, it may not be rescinded or canceled. This means that after OPT is authorized by the USCIS, it is impossible to have it canceled and restored at a later date.
- D. **Change of employer after OPT has been authorized:** As of April 2008, it is unclear whether or not students may change employers while on the 17-month extension of OPT. It appears that a new OPT application may be required. Students who are considering changing employers should NOT BEGIN EMPLOYMENT with the new employer until they have consulted with an OIE advisor and completed any required application.

E. **Social Security and Other Taxes**

In general, F-1 students who have been in the US fewer than five tax years are “non-residents for tax purposes” and are exempt from Social Security (FICA) and Medicare taxes (see Internal Revenue Service Publication 519, “US Tax Guide for Aliens”). However, your earnings are subject to applicable federal, state, and local taxes. Beginning in the sixth tax year, most students in F-1 status become “residents for tax purposes” and employers should withhold Social Security and Medicare taxes. Tax returns must be filed on or before April 15 each year for the previous calendar year, for both “non-residents” and “residents.”

F. **Traveling Outside of the US While on OPT**

Reentry provisions of the regulations require students who have graduated and are on authorized OPT to present the following documents to reenter the US:

1. SEVIS I-20, signed on page 3 by the OIE advisor, within the last six months.
2. The Employment Authorization Document (EAD).
3. A valid passport.
4. A valid F-1 visa stamp (e.g. unless traveling to contiguous territory for less than 30 days—see travel handout).
5. A job offer letter/proof of employment. F regulations allow for travel and reentry in order to “resume employment.”
6. **Dependent Travel:** Since dependents do not receive an EAD and the OPT recommendation is not noted on dependent I-20s, an F-2 dependent must carry copies of the F-1 student’s I-20 with OPT recommendation, EAD card and job offer letter, in addition to the F-2 I-20 when traveling.
7. **Note:** travel during the “gap cap” period (see below) may not be possible if the EAD has expired; consult with an OIE advisor if you have plans to travel in that circumstance.

Travel at any time while in F-1 status carries some risk. This risk increases for individuals on OPT if the F-1 visa has expired and a new one is required in order to reenter the US or if the F-1 student has been unemployed for more than 120 days. **Be sure to consult with the OIE Advisor when contemplating travel outside the US and reentry to continue Optional Practical Training.**

G. **Employment Authorization with a pending H-1B petition (“Cap Gap” employment authorization)**

- All students on OPT who have an H-1B petition with a request for change of status will automatically have their F-1 status and OPT authorization automatically extended if:
  1. The employer has filed a timely H-1B petition and change of status request with a requested October 1 start date
  2. The application is either pending or has been approved.
- The OPT employment authorization automatically ends if the H-1B petition is denied, rejected or withdrawn (although the student can continue working until the end date indicated on the OPT Employment Authorization Document (EAD). The F-1 would have a 60 day grace period with no work authorization after the end of OPT.



Carnegie Mellon University  
 5000 Forbes Avenue  
 Warner Hall, Third Floor  
 Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
 Tel: 412.268.5231  
 Fax: 412.268.7832

www.cmu.edu/oie  
 Students & Scholars: oie@andrew.cmu.edu  
 Study Abroad: goabroad@andrew.cmu.edu

## 17-Month STEM OPT Extension Request Form

Please complete the following information. The OIE advisor will use the information to recommend your OPT. If you are unsure how to complete this form, schedule a telephone appointment with an OIE advisor by calling 412-268-5231.

To request the OIE recommendation you must submit the following to OIE at the above address:

1. This 17-month STEM Extension Request Form
2. The Attestation Form
3. IF you are requesting express mail service (2<sup>nd</sup> day air), a check payable to Carnegie Mellon University in the amount of \$15.00

**Your Information:**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Family) (First) (Middle)

SEVIS Number (above bar-code on I-20, starting with N): \_\_\_\_\_

CMU Degree/Major (most recent): \_\_\_\_\_

Your residential address, line 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Your residential address, line 2: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Your email: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Address, line 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Address, line 2: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

**Receiving the I-20:**

- I will pick up the I-20 from OIE
- I designate \_\_\_\_\_ to pick up the I-20 for me.
- I request OIE to mail the I-20 to me by  regular US mail  UPS 2<sup>nd</sup> day air mail

**If you choose express (2<sup>nd</sup> day air mail), you must send a check, payable to Carnegie Mellon University, in the amount of \$15.00 with this request form.**

Mailing information Address:

Company or Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact/Ship to Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address Line 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Address Line 2: \_\_\_\_\_

(Apartment, Suite, Building number, etc.)

Address Line 3: \_\_\_\_\_

(Department, c/o, etc.)

Other Address Information: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Is this a residential address?  Yes  No

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_



Carnegie Mellon University  
 5000 Forbes Avenue  
 Warner Hall, Third Floor  
 Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
 Tel: 412.268.5231  
 Fax: 412.268.7832

www.cmu.edu/oie  
 Students & Scholars: oie@andrew.cmu.edu  
 Study Abroad: goabroad@andrew.cmu.edu

**17-Month STEM OPT Extension Attestation**

Write your initials in each box to indicate that you have **READ** and **UNDERSTOOD** each item. **KEEP a copy of this form** for your records and provide a copy to your employer so they are aware of their requirements. **I certify that:**

\_\_\_\_\_ My employer participates in the E-Verify program. The E-Verify Company Identification Number or E-Verify Client Company Identification Number is: \_\_\_\_\_ or I have attached a letter from my employer verifying their participation in the E-Verify program.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will notify OIE within 10 days of any change in my name, my residential address, my employer’s name or my employer’s address.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will provide my employer with a copy of this certification and advise my employer that they are required by law to contact OIE within 48 hours if my employment ends prior to the end of my OPT. OIE’s contact information can be found at the top of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_ If traveling, I will make timely requests for OIE signatures (at least a week before traveling outside the US) on my I-20. To request the signature, I will complete and print the OIE Request for Services on the OIE website ([http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/oie/document\\_request.pdf](http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/oie/document_request.pdf)) and send it to OIE with my I-20.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will verify my name, my address, my employer’s name and my employer’s address **every six months** beginning on the date my 12-month period of OPT expires. I realize that **I have a 10-business day period** to make this verification. Therefore, I must verify my name, my address, my employer’s name and my employer’s address within 10 business days of (insert dates):

- the date my current 12-month period of OPT expires \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 months after my 12-month period of OPT expires \_\_\_\_\_
- 12 months after my 12-month period of OPT expires \_\_\_\_\_
- AND at any time there is a change of information.

\_\_\_\_\_ I realize that failure to verify the above information at these 6 month intervals is considered a violation of status and may result in loss of my legal status in the US and my employment authorization.

\_\_\_\_\_ If my immigration status changes, I will notify OIE by providing OIE a copy of my I-94 showing my new status so that my F-1 SEVIS record can be properly updated.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will always provide current a current email address to OIE AND I will read OIE emails to insure that I am aware of any changes pertaining to my immigration status.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will notify OIE if I lose my job or if I am considering changing employers (NOTE: as of 4/2008, it is unclear whether or not you may change employers during the 17-month STEM OPT extension without having to apply for USCIS authorization).

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 (date)