

## F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) SPECIAL 17-MONTH EXTENSION

### What is OPT?

Practical work experience in your field of study, typically after completion of a degree for a maximum of 29 months (12 months of “regular” OPT with a 17-month extension possible).

### Who is eligible for the 17-month OPT extension?

- Students who have already been approved for 12 months of post-completion OPT; **and**
- Who have earned a degree in a field included on the US Government’s list of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields; **and**
- Who are employed in a job directly related to his/her field of study; **and**
- Who are working for an employer that is enrolled in the US Government’s E-Verify program.

*Please Note: All four of the above criteria must be met in order for a student to be eligible for the 17-month OPT extension.*

### Is my degree in a STEM field?

Please refer to the list of all MSU majors which 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 OPT extension. The list may be viewed here: [http://www.oiiss.msu.edu/optchanges\\_04\\_18.php](http://www.oiiss.msu.edu/optchanges_04_18.php).

### What is E-Verify?

E-Verify is a database system operated by the Department of Homeland Security in partnership with the Social Security Administration. It allows participating employers to electronically verify the employment eligibility of newly-hired employees. E-Verify is currently voluntary in most states. For more information visit [www.dhs.gov/e-verify](http://www.dhs.gov/e-verify).

### When should one apply for the 17-month OPT extension?

Students must apply for the special 17-month OPT extension prior to the expiration of the first 12 months of “regular” OPT. 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 OPT extension is successfully received prior to the expiration of the first OPT period, *students may continue employment* until the application is processed *or* until 180 days have passed, whichever is sooner.

### Additional Information

#### **Reporting requirements during the 17-month extension:**

Students approved for the 17-month OPT 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:
  - Legal name

- Residential or mailing address
  - Employer name
  - Employer address, and/or
  - Loss of employment
- Students must make a validation report to the MSU OISS **every six months** 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 OPT extension may not accrue more than 120 days of unemployment during the total 29-month period of OPT. Employment must be **paid** and must be related to the field of study in order to qualify. Self-employment and volunteer positions will not qualify as valid employment for OPT purposes during the special 17-month OPT extension.

### **17-Month Extension Available Once:**

The special 17-month extension of OPT is only available to each student one time. A student who is approved for a 17-month OPT extension can never apply for it again. Please 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 US (i.e. bachelor’s, then master’s, then doctoral).

### **Starting and Ending Dates:**

The start date of the 17-month OPT 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.)

### **Application Procedures for Students:**

1. Assemble the following documents. If you are located within a reasonable distance of MSU, please meet with an advisor during walk-in advising hours (Mon-Fri, 1pm-3pm). 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](mailto:oiss@msu.edu) or via fax to 517-355-4657. (Incomplete submissions cannot be processed.)

- Completed **I-765 form** – can be downloaded at <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-765.pdf>. Please note: the answer for #16 is **(c)(3)(C)**. The answer for #17 under “Degree” should be the 6-digit code appearing next to “Primary Major” at the top of page 3 on your I-20. Please obtain E-Verify information from your employer. The E-Verify number is always 5 to 6 digits long.
- 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**.
- Photocopy of the front and back of your **I-94 card**.
- Photocopy of the picture page / expiration date of your **passport**.

- **Two** full frontal / passport-style **photos** (see example attached) taken within the past 30 days. Gently print your name and SEVIS ID number on the back of the pictures.
- **\$340** personal check or money order made payable to **“Department of Homeland Security.”**
- Provide OISS with your current email address, job title, supervisor’s name, and supervisor’s contact information.

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 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 pages 1 and 3 of your **new I-20 endorsed for the 17-month OPT extension**. (Do not send the original.) Make sure to sign your new I-20 before you make the photocopy.
- Completed **I-765 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**.
- Photocopy of the front and back of your **I-94 card**.
- Photocopy of the picture page / expiration date of your **passport**.
- Two** full frontal / passport-style **photos** (see example attached) taken within the past 30 days. Gently print your name and SEVIS ID number on the back of the pictures.
- \$340** personal check or money order made payable to **“Department of Homeland Security.”**

### 4. Sending your application:

We recommend that you send your OPT application via U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Certified Mail or through a courier service (examples: FedEx, DHL, UPS). There are four USCIS Service Centers in the United States that process I-765 (OPT) applications. The address you use on the I-765 determines where you should send your application (see next page).

5. Within approximately two weeks of sending your application you will receive a Notice of Action. This is proof that you have an application pending with USICS. The Notice of Action will contain your Receipt Number (“LIN number”). You can use this number to check your case status online at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) (in the lower right corner).

6. If you successfully file the application for your 17-month OPT 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.

7. If your OPT extension is approved, you must send a photocopy of your new EAD card to OISS.

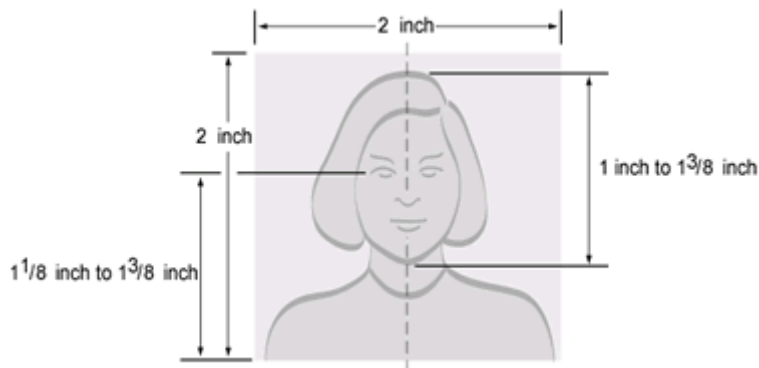
8. Please see “During the 17-month OPT Extension” on the next page for more details on how to meet the requirements for properly maintaining your F-1 visa status.

### **Color Photograph Specifications:**

All photos must be of just the applicant 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.

### **7 Steps to Successful Photos:**

- Frame subject with full face, front view, eyes open
- Make sure photo presents full head from top of hair to bottom of chin: height of head should measure 1 inch to 1-3/8 inches (25 mm to 35 mm)
- Center head within frame (see Figure below)
- Make sure eye height is between 1-1/8 inches to 1-3/8 inches (28 mm and 35 mm) from bottom of photo
- Photograph subject against a plain white or off-white background
- Position subject and lighting so that there are no distracting shadows on the face or background
- Encourage subject to have a natural expression



## DURING THE 17-MONTH OPT EXTENSION

### How to maintain your F-1 status

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

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 [oiiss@msu.edu](mailto:oiiss@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 [oiiss@msu.edu](mailto:oiiss@msu.edu).
4. If you experience an interruption in employment, you must report it to the OISS. You can report via email to [oiiss@msu.edu](mailto:oiiss@msu.edu).
5. **You are required to make a validation report to the OISS every six months** starting from the date your 17-month OPT extension is approved. The report is due within 10 days of the required reporting date. The validation report must be sent via email to [oiiss@msu.edu](mailto:oiiss@msu.edu) and must contain the following information:
  - a. Legal name
  - b. Residential / mailing address
  - c. Employer name
  - d. Employer address
  - e. Confirmation that you are currently employed by the employer named

### Travel During OPT

Travel outside the US during OPT can be risky. Please consult with an OISS advisor if you plan to travel during OPT. To re-enter the US during OPT, 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 OPT with a travel signature less than 6 months old
- Unexpired EAD card
- Confirmation of employment letter from your US employer

**Please 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.oiiss.msu.edu/students\\_travel\\_autorevalid.php](http://www.oiiss.msu.edu/students_travel_autorevalid.php)

If you are subject to Special Registration (NSEERS), please make sure to use official ports of departure to exit the US and allow sufficient time at airports and land crossings to complete the required exit interview (even if traveling to Canada or Mexico).

### **Ending Your OPT**

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 US. If you depart the US 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 OPT, please make sure that you depart the US 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 OPT 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.

Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

I-765, Application For
Employment Authorization

Do not write in this block.

Remarks, Action Block, Fee Stamp
A#
Applicant is filing under §274a.12
Application Approved. Employment Authorized / Extended (Circle One) until (Date).
Subject to the following conditions:
Application Denied.
Failed to establish eligibility under 8 CFR 274a.12 (a) or (c).
Failed to establish economic necessity as required in 8 CFR 274a.12(c)(14), (18) and 8 CFR 214.2(f)

I am applying for:
Permission to accept employment.
Replacement (of lost employment authorization document)
Renewal of my permission to accept employment (attach previous employment authorization document).

1. Name (Family Name in CAPS) (First) (Middle) Which USCIS Office? Date(s)
2. Other Names Used (Include Maiden Name) Results (Granted or Denied - attach all documentation)
3. Address in the United States (Number and Street) (Apt. Number) 12. Date of Last Entry into the U.S. (mm/dd/yyyy)
(Town or City) (State/Country) (ZIP Code) 13. Place of Last Entry into the U.S.
4. Country of Citizenship/Nationality 14. Manner of Last Entry (Visitor, Student, etc.)
5. Place of Birth (Town or City) (State/Province) (Country) 15. Current Immigration Status (Visitor, Student, etc.)
6. Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy) 7. Gender Male Female
8. Marital Status Married Single Widowed Divorced
9. Social Security Number (Include all numbers you have ever used) (if any)
10. Alien Registration Number (A-Number) or I-94 Number (if any)
11. Have you ever before applied for employment authorization from USCIS? Yes (If yes, complete below) No
16. Go to Part 2 of the Instructions, Eligibility Categories. In the space below, place the letter and number of the category you selected from the instructions (For example, (a)(8), (c)(17)(iii), etc.).
Eligibility under 8 CFR 274a.12 ( ) ( ) ( )
17. If you entered the Eligibility Category, (c)(3)(C), in item 16 above, list your degree, your employer's name as listed in E-Verify, and your employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or a valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number in the space below.
Degree:
Employer's Name as listed in E-Verify:
Employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or a valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number

Certification

Your Certification: I certify, under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America, that the foregoing is true and correct. Furthermore, I authorize the release of any information that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services needs to determine eligibility for the benefit I am seeking. I have read the Instructions in Part 2 and have identified the appropriate eligibility category in Block 16.

Signature Telephone Number Date

Signature of person preparing form, if other than above: I declare that this document was prepared by me at the request of the applicant and is based on all information of which I have any knowledge.

Print Name Address Signature Date

Table with 5 columns: Remarks, Initial Receipt, Resubmitted, Relocated (Rec'd, Sent, Approved), Completed (Denied, Returned)

