Optional Practical Training (OPT)
Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment authorization related to an F-1 student’s academic program. Its purpose is to provide authorization to obtain employment experience in the field of study, and to complement a completed degree. F-1 students qualify for an initial 12 months of OPT per higher degree level.

OPT STEM extensions (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math)
Apply early! You may submit your OPT STEM extension request to USCIS up to 120 days prior to your current EAD expiration date, but you must apply before your current EAD expires. Work authorization will extend throughout the pending period of the extension request up to 180 days. OPT STEM graduates are permitted only ONE 17-month OPT STEM extension. You must provide OU ISS with your current contact information, including your personal email address and a phone number. To verify an OPT STEM major, go to http://www.ice.gov/sevis/stemlist.htm.

OPT Eligibility Requirements
All OPT employment must be directly related to the major field of study on the I-20. You must currently be authorized for an initial period of 12 months of OPT. STEM graduates who are employed in their degree field by a US employer who is enrolled in E-Verify may apply for an additional 17 months of OPT for a total of 29 months. OPT STEM applicants must have successfully completed a degree on the STEM Designated Degree Program list.

STEM Extension Application Procedure

STEP 1: ISS Procedures
1. Submit your online request for an OPT STEM Extension I-20 Request on our website (Under “Forms”)
2. Submit a check or money order for $150 payable to the University of Oklahoma, or pay the maintenance fee online with a credit card when submitting your request for an I-20. OU charges work authorization extension maintenance fee to continue maintaining your record for the additional 19 months you will remain in F-1 status with OU.
3. ISS will review your documents and prepare a recommendation (new I-20) for you if you are eligible for a STEM extension. This may take 3-10 business days.
4. Your new I-20 recommending you for a STEM extension will be sent to you. Sign it, make a copy, and include it with your application.
5. Send or email a copy of your signed STEM OPT I-20 to the OU ISS office.
6. You will use eShip Global to obtain courier service for your documents so that they can be sent directly to you from our office. Go to our website and click the Mailing Immigration Documents link under Immigration & Visa. Follow the instructions.

STEP 2: Prepare your Application to USCIS
   a. On #16, indicate (c)(3)(C).
   b. For #17, provide employer’s e-Verify information.
2. Submit 2 photos made to USCIS specifications. See instructions at (http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/m-603.pdf). Write your name and I-94 admission number on the back of photos. Do not cut or alter the photos in any way. We recommend you place your photos in a small envelope or plastic bags so that they will not get lost.

3. Obtain a check or money order for $380 payable to Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

4. Include a photocopy of pages 1 and 3 of the I-20 showing the OPT recommendation. Make sure to sign it! USCIS must receive your application within 30 days of the I-20 being issued to you.

5. Photocopy of your VALID passport photo page and passport expiration page.

6. Photocopy of your student visa, or prior visa if you entered the US in a status other than F-1

7. Photocopy of your most recent I-94 card (front and back or electronic printout)

8. Photocopy of your current OPT I-20

9. Photocopy of previous EAD card

10. Submit an official OU transcript to show that you have completed a STEM degree.

STEP 3: Mail your Application to USCIS

1. Make a copy of the entire application packet for your records

2. Mail the application to the appropriate USCIS Service Center based upon the address you list on the I-765 form. Visit the USCIS website at http://www.uscis.gov for the proper mailing address.

OPT Reporting Requirements

1. You must report any changes to US employer, work address and residential address within 10 days on the ISS Website: www.ou.edu/iss.

2. You must report your US employer, work address and residential address every 6 months on the ISS Website: www.ou.edu/iss.

3. You must report start and end dates of any period of unemployment while on OPT

4. Submit a copy of your signed STEM I-20 to the OU ISS office

5. Submit a copy of your extended EAD card to the OU ISS office for record keeping.

6. 120+ days of unemployment during OPT STEM extension period (counted from your EAD start date) will result in the loss of your F-1 status

7. Your US employer must report to OU ISS within 48 hours if you have left their employment

8. OU ISS is not responsible for your employer’s reporting responsibilities, nor for advising your employer of their reporting responsibilities.

This process may be subject to change due to changes in the regulations. Please contact us at iss@ou.edu if you have any questions.

Updated 12/10/2015