Eligibility for 17-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 17 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 #17 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 17-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 17-month STEM OPT extension anytime 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.
- The new I-765 instructions state that a “copy of the degree” must be submitted for applications filed under (c)(3)(C). USCIS clarified that this could include:
  - Official transcripts
  - Unofficial transcripts
  - Copy of the diploma as long as it states the program of study

SEND ALL DOCUMENTS TO:

**USCIS Phoenix Lockbox**

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries:
USCIS
PO Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

For Express mail and courier deliveries:
USCIS
Attn: AOS
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S
Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85034