

To: DSOs and PDSOs at SEVP-certified schools only (for F and M students)

Date: May 4, 2016

Re: Revised Guidance for SEVIS Workarounds and STEM OPT Transition

Number: 1605-01

General Information

After consultation with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is revising its guidance on the handling of 24-month extensions of optional practical training (OPT) to include special instructions for students whose:

- Post-completion OPT ends before May 23, 2016, and
- Eligibility is based on a prior science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) degree

USCIS and SEVP developed special filing instructions for a limited number of students who become eligible on May 10, 2016 for a STEM extension based on a prior degree or for a seven-month extension of approved STEM OPT and who must file their applications *before* May 23, 2016. These students cannot meet the technical requirements for filing because:

- SEVP will deploy the STEM-related functionality into the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) on May 13, 2016
- Designated school officials (DSOs) need time to generate and send the Form I-20 to students who may be out of state
- Students need time to sign the Form I-20 and send a copy of it with the application for employment authorization (Form I-765) to USCIS

The chart below, originally released on April 4, 2016, has been revised to include guidance for these students.

| Student Scenario | Required Actions |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| New 24-month STEM OPT requests | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Designated school official (DSOs) will be able to use the current functionality to recommend extensions of OPT. SEVIS will automatically calculate the 24-month OPT end date.• For cases where the filing deadline is close to May 10, 2016, DSOs can file the STEM extension under the existing 17-month rules. USCIS will send requests for evidence (RFEs) for STEM extensions that are pending with them on May 10, 2016. DSOs will be able to convert the case after USCIS issues the RFE.• DSOs must enter the following information into the “Explain how employment is related to student’s course of study” field: <i>I have reviewed the Form I-983. It is completed, signed and addresses all program requirements.</i>• If the recommendation is based on a prior degree, DSOs must |

| Student Scenario | Required Actions |
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| | <p>enter the following information into the “Explain how employment is related to student's course of study” field:</p> <p><i>Extension based on prior STEM degree: (Enter information on: qualifying major, qualifying degree level, Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) code, date of degree, school awarding degree, school location, awarding school code and class of admission at time of degree.)</i></p> <p>Note: New applications received by USCIS on or after May 10, 2016, must meet the new requirements.</p> <p>Special instructions for students who are eligible for a STEM extension based on a PRIOR degree and whose current post-completion OPT ends before May 23, 2016:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students should file the Form I-765, “Application for Employment Authorization,” with USCIS without the Form I-20, “Certificate for Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status,” but include a statement that indicates the following: <p><i>Due to new regulations, I must apply for the 24-month STEM extension of my OPT before SEVIS supports it. I am eligible based on a prior degree. I will provide a Form I-20 with the extension recommendation after USCIS requests it.</i></p> <p>Note: These applications cannot arrive at USCIS before May 10, 2016.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students should wait to send the Form I-20 to USCIS until after USCIS requests it. |
| <p>17-month STEM OPT extensions pending on May 10, 2016</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USCIS will issue an RFE asking for a Form I-20 with the 24-month STEM recommendation. • After receiving the RFE, the DSO should convert the OPT recommendation from a 17-month to a 24-month STEM OPT recommendation using the functionality in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) Release 6.26 deployed on May 13, 2016. • DSOs must enter the following information into the “Explain how employment is related to student's course of study” field: <p><i>I have reviewed the Form I-983. It is completed, signed and addresses all program requirements.</i></p> <p>Note: A completed Form I-983, “Training Plan for STEM OPT Students.” and a USCIS-issued RFE are required before converting the recommendation from a 17-month OPT extension to a 24-month OPT extension.</p> |

| Student Scenario | Required Actions |
|---|--|
| <p>17-month STEM OPT extensions approved before May 10, 2016</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The filing period is May 10, 2016, through Aug. 8, 2016. Some students do not have the full application period. Students must have at least 150 days of approved STEM OPT left on the day that USCIS receives their Form I-765. Once the functionality is available, DSOs must recommend the seven-month extension in SEVIS. • DSOs must enter the following information into the “Explain how employment is related to student’s course of study” field: <i>I have reviewed the Form I-983. It is completed, signed and addresses all program requirements.</i> <p>Special instructions for students whose filing deadline for the seven-month STEM OPT extension is before May 23, 2016:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students should file the Form I-765 with USCIS without the Form I-20 but include a statement that indicates the following: <i>Due to new regulations, I must apply for the seven-month extension of my STEM OPT before SEVIS supports it. I will provide a Form I-20 with the extension recommendation after USCIS requests it.</i> <p>Note: These applications cannot arrive at USCIS before May 10, 2016.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students should wait to send the Form I-20 to USCIS until after USCIS requests it. |

Available Resources

The following resources are available to assist with the transition:

- [STEM OPT Hub](#) on Study in the States
- [USCIS Optional Practical Training Extension for STEM Students \(STEM OPT\)](#) page
- [SEVIS Release 6.26 Planning Guide](#)
- [Planning Tool for 7-Month Extension of STEM OPT](#)
- [Planning Tool for 24-Month Extension of STEM OPT](#)
- [SEVIS Workarounds for STEM OPT Webinar recording and slides](#)
- [STEM OPT Rule Implementation in SEVIS](#) page

Comments

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