

April 8, 2008, USC Office of International Services

UPDATE - New 29-Month Rule for Optional Practical Training (OPT)

On Tuesday April 8, 2008 a new rule on Optional Practical Training for F-1 students is expected to become effective which will allow **certain** students within the **STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics)** fields to apply for an OPT extension for up to 17 additional months following their first 12-month OPT period. This would allow the eligible students to then have a total of 29 months of OPT after graduating from USC with a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree.

Here is a brief summary of the key provision for the 17 months OPT extension:

- Only certain STEM degree holders are eligible (see list below for majors);
- Student must be currently participating in a 12 month period of OPT, and working for a U.S. employer in a job directly related to the student's major of study. Thus, a student cannot ask for 29 months up front on an initial OPT application.
- Student must have successfully completed a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree from USC;
- Student must have a job offer from an employer registered with the E-Verify employment verification system. Very few employers are registered with the E-Verify system at this time. The E-Verify system allows employers to use an electronic I-9 form for all employees. Click here for more information: http://www.dhs.gov/ximgtn/programs/gc_1185221678150.shtm
- A student must file another OPT application, including the I-765 form and fee, with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) by the end date of the current OPT authorization.

Because this rule is so recent, USC is still receiving information about the specific filing requirements for both the student and the university. Thus, once USC learns of any new information we will be sure to notify students of any important updates to the procedures. At the current time, no applications for 17-month OPT extensions are being accepted until full application instructions are available. For the latest details, continue to monitor the OIS website: **www.usc.edu/student-affairs/OIS/**

Preliminary list of eligible USC majors:

Aerospace Engineering
Applied and Computational Mathematics
Applied Biostatistics and Epidemiology
Applied Mathematics
Applied Mechanics
Astronautical Engineering
Astronautics and Space Technology
Astronomy
Biological Sciences
Biology

Biochemistry
Biomedical Engineering
Biophysics
Biostatistics
Cell and Neurobiology
Chemical Engineering
Chemistry
Clinical and Biomedical Investigations
Civil Engineering
Computational Biology and Bioinformatics
Computer Engineering
Computer Science
Earth Sciences
Electrical Engineering
Engineering
Engineering Management
Environmental Engineering
Environmental Quality Management
Epidemiology
Experimental and Molecular Pathology
Genetic, Molecular, and Cellular Biology
Geological Sciences
Industrial and Systems Engineering
Integrative and Evolutionary Biology
Manufacturing Engineering
Marine and Environmental Biology
Materials Engineering
Materials Science
Mathematics
Mechanical Engineering
Medical Device and Diagnostics Engineering
Molecular Biology
Molecular Epidemiology
Molecular Pharmacology and Toxicology
Operations Research Engineering
Pathobiology
Petroleum Engineering
Physical Sciences
Physics
Physiology and Biophysics
Software Engineering
Smart Oilfield Technologies
Statistics
Structural Design
Systems Architecture and Engineering
Toxicology
Transportation Systems