MBLE Student OPT & STEM Guide

✓ Currently, foreign students in F-1 nonimmigrant status in the MBLE program who have been enrolled on a full-time basis for at least one full academic year are eligible for 12 months of optional practical training (OPT) to work for a U.S. employer in a job directly related to the student's level and major area of study.

✓ Additionally, an extension to OPT called STEM, extends the maximum period of OPT from 12 months to 29 months for F-1 students in the MBLE program who have completed their degree and accepted employment with employers enrolled in U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' (USCIS') E-Verify employment verification program. The student must complete his/her 12 month OPT period to qualify for STEM.

How Do I Enroll into OPT?

1) Go to the Office of International Affairs (OIA) and meet with an Immigration Coordinator. Explain to him/her that you would like to apply for OPT. They are available for walk-in advising on Monday-Thursday 1-4pm. You must schedule an appointment for Friday 1-4pm.
   a. 300 Oxley Hall, 1712 Neil Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43210, Phone: (614) 292-6101
   b. http://oia.ohio-state.edu/
2) You will need to complete the Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization. You can find that form at www.uscis.gov under the header “forms.”
3) Your Immigration Coordinator will help you gather all necessary documents and other supporting materials to submit with the Form I-765.
4) Schedule another meeting with your Immigration Coordinator to receive the updated Form I-20 with OPT recommendation, and to review your application to ensure you have properly completed the Form I-765 and have all the required supporting documents. The I-20 field of study must be listed as “Engineering, General.”
5) Make a photocopy of all application materials and ask your Immigration Coordinator where to file the Form I-765 and supporting documents listed in item 3.
6) Once your application has been approved, you will receive an Employment Authorization Document that you can present to your employer and use to fill out your I-9 (Employment Eligibility Verification form).

How Do I Enroll into STEM?

1) The process of filing Form I-765 is the same. Once you are reaching the end of your 12 months under OPT, you must meet with your Immigration Coordinator and get school confirmation.

What Does My Employer Need To Do?

1) To hire an OPT student, an employer does not need to do anything special. For STEM students, your employer simply needs to be registered on “E-Verify,” which is an Internet based system operated by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that allows participating employers to electronically verify the employment eligibility of their newly hired employees. E-Verify is free, fast, and the best means available for determining employment eligibility of new hires.
2) Simply ask the employer if they are registered on E-Verify, and direct them to www.uscis.gov, where they can click on the link to the “E-Verify” home page.

What Is The Most Important Thing To Do Now?

1) DO NOT PROCRASTINATE. Go to the Office of International Affairs as soon as possible. They will make this process easy and less stressful. You may apply for OPT from 90 days before and 60 days after your graduation date. The OPT “clock” starts on your chosen date. Immigration service must receive your complete application for STEM-OPT Extension no later than the end date on the current EAD card.
2) The dates for OPT Workshops hosted by OSU’s OIA are listed at http://oia.osu.edu/international-students/workshops.html

*Data source: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services www.uscis.gov