

End of Duration of Status (D/S)

Questions & Answers

1. DURATION OF STATUS

Q: Does the rule apply to students who are already in the U.S. and their Form I-94 has D/S?

A: Yes, it does apply. Even if your Form I-94 says D/S, you will have a period of authorized stay: Your Form I-20 program end date plus 60 days grace period or 4 years from September 15, 2026, plus 60 days grace period, whichever is sooner.

2. I-20 END DATE

Q: I'm a current student and my I-20 has the correct end date. Is there anything else I need to do?

A: There's nothing you need to do at this time. As always, maintain valid F-1 status and after September 15, be mindful of your authorized period of stay in the U.S. Also be mindful of the academic mobility restrictions (Ugrad/Grad) and plan ahead if you would like to remain in the U.S. for OPT or start another program after your program completion.

3. I-20 END DATE

Q: I may need to graduate one semester later than on my I-20. What should I do?

A: Please check your Form I-20 and ensure that your major and your program completion date are accurate. If you will not be able to complete your program by the listed end date, we recommend applying for a program extension with ISSS as soon as possible, if eligible, so you can obtain your updated Form I-20 before September 15. Refer to the ISSS website or the e-mail announcing this webinar for details. If unsure of your completion date, please discuss your academic progress with your academic advisor. ISSS will only be able to process program extension requests for eligible students. Keep in mind that students who apply for an extension will need to show documentation about proof of funding.

4. I-20 END DATE

Q: When should I apply for a Program Extension from ISSS if my I-20 is still valid until next year?

A: If eligible, we recommend applying for a program extension as soon as possible and to obtain your updated Form I-20 before September 15. Keep in mind that you will need to show documentation of proof of funding for 12 months or 9 months, depending on your academic term length (refer to your Form I-20).

5. AUTHORIZED PERIOD OF STAY

Q: My I-20 has a 2029 end date. Do I need to apply for a program extension? Or will my stay automatically be extended until 4 years after the rule effective date?

A: The authorized stay does not get extended automatically. It will be limited to 4 years regardless of your Form I-20 program end date. Again, the authorized stay is your program end date plus 60 days grace period if you don't travel internationally, OR 4 years and 60 days grace period after September 15, whichever is shorter. If you travel and return to the U.S., the authorized stay will be your program end date plus 30 days grace period OR 4 years and 30 days, whichever is shorter. You can only apply for a program extension if academically needed and if you're eligible.

6. I-20 END DATE

Q: My current I-20 end date is May 2027. I was wondering, if I extend my I-20 end date to December 2027, would I still be able to graduate earlier than December if I complete all of my degree requirements?

A: Yes! If the extension is not needed after all and you will complete your program before the I-20 program end date, ISSS can adjust the program end date in SEVIS accordingly.

7. EXTENSION OF STAY

Q: Can I apply for a program extension in March 2027?

A: Yes, students will be able to apply for a program extension after September 15; however, they will also need to file for an extension of stay with USCIS, including the filing fee. Processing times are still unclear and may be long. Alternatively, it should be possible to extend the authorized period of stay by exiting and reentering the U.S. with the updated Form I-20. If needed and if eligible, we recommend applying for a program extension as soon as possible and to obtain the updated Form I-20 before September 15. If the extension is not needed after all and you will complete your program before the I-20 program end date, ISSS can adjust the program end date in SEVIS accordingly.

8. EXTENSION OF STAY

Q: I'm a Senior and planning on applying to Graduate school. If I get in, will I be required to file an extension of stay?

A: You will need to extend your period of authorized stay for the new program, which can be done with an extension of stay application or travel and reentry with the new Form I-20.

9. TRAVEL

Q: Can I travel to conferences and fieldwork outside of the U.S.?

A: Travel guidance has not changed. As always, students need their valid passport, unexpired F-1 visa, a valid Form I-20 with an unexpired travel signature to enter the U.S. You will receive an I-94 with an Admit Until Date (AUD). This may affect future processes in case you would like to extend your stay in the U.S., for example, apply for OPT or start another program.

10. F-1 VISA

Q: My current visa expires approximately one year after graduation. Since my new major makes me eligible for STEM OPT, should I renew/update my F-1 visa during summer 2027 to reflect this change and account for the longer OPT period, or should I continue using my current visa until it expires?

A: The F-1 visa is required to enter the U.S., along with the passport and valid Form I-20. If the visa expires in 2028, it would likely be too early to apply for a new F-1 visa in Summer 2027. Also, without the OPT or STEM OPT recommendation on the Form I-20, the visa would not be issued for the duration of these benefits. The major has no influence on the validity time of the F-1 visa.

11. POST-COMPLETION OPT

Q: What are the implications for students completing their programs in December 2026, and planning to start OPT in January 2027?

A: The OPT application process depends on the travel – if you have not traveled and entered the U.S. after September 15, then you may apply for OPT without filing an extension of stay. If you travel and enter the U.S. in F-1 status after September 15, you will need to file for an extension of stay along with filing Form I-765. Keep in mind that both applications need to be approved for you to start working on OPT. Apply as soon as you're eligible due to an expected backlog with USCIS.

12. POST-COMPLETION OPT

Q: How will this new rule affect any OPT application? Is it suggested that students avoid leaving the country from September 15th until the OPT application is approved?

A: Depending on the program completion date, we recommend students who can apply for OPT without filing for the extension of stay to take advantage of this benefit. As always, there's a certain risk involved when traveling and it's an individual decision.

13. POST-COMPLETION OPT

Q: How will the rule affect my future post-completion OPT application?

A: The OPT application process depends on your program completion date and travel – if you have not traveled and entered the U.S. on or after September 15, and graduate in Fall 2026, Spring 2027 or Summer A 2027, you may be able to apply for OPT without filing an extension of stay. If you travel and enter the U.S. in F-1 status on or after September 15 or you will complete your program after Summer A or don't apply for OPT before March 18, 2027, you will need to file for an extension of stay along with filing Form I-765. Keep in mind that both applications need to be approved for you to start working on OPT. Apply as soon as you're eligible due to an expected backlog with USCIS.

14. POST-COMPLETION OPT

Q: Once OPT is approved do the rules change? Is there anything we should be telling our employers?

A: Status maintenance requirements during OPT are not affected by the new rule. Once OPT is approved, you can get hired for a position related to your major field of study and will have the documents to legally work in the U.S.

15. TRAVEL

Q: I'm currently on OPT. Can I travel for Christmas and come back to the U.S.?

A: Travel after September 15: You will receive a Form I-94 with an Admit Until Date (AUD) which is the end of your EAD plus 30 days grace period. Travel documentation has not changed, so please make sure to have your valid passport, F-1 visa, unexpired Form I-20, EAD, and your employer letter to enter the U.S. in F-1 status.

16. STEM OPT

Q: I'm currently on OPT and looking to extend for STEM OPT. What do I need to know?

A: The application process depends on the eligibility and timing of your STEM OPT application and travel plans: Students who are in the U.S. on September 15, 2026 and file for OPT/STEM OPT on or before March 18, 2027, can apply for employment authorization without the additional EOS process (provided they do not depart and re-enter the U.S. before filing their OPT/STEM OPT employment authorization application with USCIS). Students who travel internationally after September 15 and/or file for STEM OPT after March 18, 2027, will require a simultaneous Extension of Stay (EOS).

17. STEM OPT

Q: What happens to an already-approved STEM OPT (24 Months)?

A: Status maintenance requirements during STEM OPT are not affected by the new rule. Once STEM OPT is approved, follow the training plan, and comply with reporting requirements during STEM OPT. If you travel and enter the U.S. in F-1 status, you will receive an I-94 with an AUD (end date on EAD plus 30 days grace period).

18. TRAVEL + STEM OPT

Q: I'm on STEM OPT and I plan to travel. Are there any additional requirements for my STEM OPT and what documents do I need to return?

A: Travel guidance during STEM OPT has not changed: ensure you have your valid passport, unexpired F-1 visa, Form I-20 with an unexpired travel signature, your EAD, and an employer letter to enter the U.S. in F-1 status. You will get an Admit Until Date (AUD) on your Form I-94, which will be the end date on your EAD plus 30 days grace period.

19. CHANGE OF STATUS

Q: I am on STEM OPT that is due to expire on July 2027. I have my H1B petition under processing, not yet approved, but the start date for H1B status is October 1 but unlikely to be approved till then. Should I be filing an extension of stay for my F1 to stay in legal status even though I have an EAD till July 2027?

A: If your STEM OPT is valid until July 2027, your authorized period of stay is until August or September 2027, depending on travel. If your H1-B becomes effective October 1st, 2026, then you would not need to file for an extension of stay because you change status before the authorized period of stay ends. In any case, please discuss your change of status details with your Immigration attorney.