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USCIS Announces Premium Processing For Certain F-1 Students Seeking OPT Or STEM OPT Extensions

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On March 6, 2023, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) [announced the expansion of its premium processing service](#) to include certain F-1 students seeking OPT (optional practical training) and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) OPT. The USCIS' expansion of premium processing to certain F-1 students reflects its continued initiative to improve processing efficiency and reduce burdens to the system.

As background, OPT employment authorization provides eligible F-1 students an opportunity to apply for up to 12 months of temporary employment related to their field of study. Eligible F-1 students may apply for OPT employment authorization pre-completion and/or post-completion of their academic studies. Eligible F-1 students who earned a degree in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics may seek a 24-month extension of their post-completion OPT work authorization.

[The USCIS implemented the premium processing expansion](#) in two phases covering F-1 students who file Form I-765, Application of Employment Authorization within eligibility categories (c)(3)(A) - Pre-Completion OPT; (c)(3)(B) - Post-Completion OPT; and (c)(3)(C) - 24-Month Extension for STEM students.

Form I-907 filing fee for eligible F-1 students is \$1,500, and the USCIS will render a decision within 30 calendar days of receipt. Per the announcement, the USCIS accepts applications via mail and now allows for online filings as well.

Currently, [Requests for Premium Processing Services](#) are designated for the following visa petitions:

Form	Classification or Category Designated for Premium Processing	Fee (when available)	Processing Time (when available)
Form I-129, Petition for Nonimmigrant Worker	E-1, E-2, E-3, H-1B, H-3, L1 (including Blanket L-1), O, P, Q, or TN nonimmigrant classification	\$2,500	15 Days
	H-2B or R nonimmigrant classification	\$1,500	15 Days
Form I-140, Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker	EB-1 (E11, E12), EB-2 (E21 non-NIW), or EB-3 (E31, E32, EW3) immigrant classification	\$2,500	15 Days
	EB-1 (E13) or EB-2 (E21 NIW) immigrant classification	\$2,500	45 Days (after all prerequisites are met)
Form I-539, Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status	E-1, E-2, E-3, F-1, F-2, H-4, J-1, J-2, L-2, M-1, M-2, O-3, P-4, or R-2 nonimmigrant classification	\$1,750	30 Days (after all prerequisites are met)
Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization	I-765 categories	\$1,500	30 Days (after all prerequisites are met)

Chart source: Form I-907: Instructions for Request for Premium Processing Service