

Thesis Master's/PhD Last Semester Notification

NEW POLICY CHANGE: Effective Spring 2019

Master's/PhD students are still eligible for a correction semester (current policy) through Fall 2018.

**Beginning Spring 2019, correction semesters will no longer be available
and the following policy changes will come into effect.**

What is a last semester?

A last semester is when a student has only one semester left prior to the completion of their program of study. During an authorized last semester from International Student & Scholar Services, a student may qualify to drop below full time and must request authorization to register for part time credits to complete their studies. If a student's last semester is summer semester, they may not be enrolled at 0 credits. A last semester during the summer will be considered a student's last semester and not a vacation semester. **All students are required to report their last semester to ISSS.**

What must I do in my last semester?

- You MUST submit a last semester e-form to ISSS through UAtlas
 - If taking less than full time credits in the last semester, you MUST indicate how many credits you are taking on the e-form and request an authorized reduced course load in the last semester. Less than full credit hours is 1-2 credits for graduate thesis students.
- You MUST be registered for at least one class that requires your on-campus physical attendance. A CPT internship class does not count towards your physical attendance to a class, however, your thesis credit may qualify. You cannot have **only** online classes during your last semester.
- The semester that you defend your thesis is considered your last semester. If you are applying for OPT, you can choose your program end date as your defense date or the last day of the semester. If you need more time on thesis correction, this may be done while you are on OPT. Please refer to the [Post-Completion OPT Policy Guide](#) for more information.
- If you need to apply for part-time or full-time CPT during your defense semester, please discuss your situation with an ISSS advisor.

What if I successfully defend my thesis but need more time to complete my thesis paper or submit corrections?

Students who successfully defend their thesis but need to finish corrections to their thesis are considered by immigration, to have completed their program because they are not required to be enrolled in credits to satisfy degree requirements. In this situation, while their program is considered completed by immigration, they may not be eligible to graduate until they have completed all thesis corrections.

For students in this situation, to maintain F-1 status, they must apply for OPT, and may continue to work on thesis corrections while on OPT. Students who do not wish to participate in OPT may return home and should consult their department on completing corrections from outside the U.S.

For more information on applying for OPT, please read the [Post-Completion OPT Policy Guide](#) carefully.

How do I apply for a last semester?

To request a last semester, please complete a “Last Semester Notification” E-Form using the UAtlas link found at www.issv.utah.edu. A new I-20 will be issued authorizing your last semester. Your program end date will be the last day of the semester.

Can I do CPT during my last semester?

Yes, you may be authorized for full-time or part-time CPT in your last semester. You may not apply for CPT unless the CPT employment is required for your thesis work. Once the end date on your I-20 has passed, you must cease all CPT employment.

Can I start working on OPT during last semester?

No, you cannot start working on your OPT before the program end date on your I-20. However, you can start your OPT application. Please refer to the [Post-Completion OPT Policy Guide](#).

Can I work on-campus during last semester?

Yes, if you are offered a position on campus, you are only allowed to work part time (20 hours or less per week). Once your program end date has passed, all on campus employment must cease.

What if I reported my last semester but have not defended by the end of that semester?

If your last semester has been approved by ISSS and you find out that you are not able to defend in that semester, it is possible that you **may** be eligible for a second last semester as long as you are enrolled in thesis credit. If you have already taken a second last semester or are not eligible for a second last semester, you must either be enrolled full time to maintain your status. ***Please make an appointment to see an ISSS advisor immediately.***

Can I travel during my last semester?

Yes, you are allowed to travel but you should have your I-20, valid passport and valid visa (if expired, you will need to renew before returning to U.S.) for re-entry. Re-entry to the U.S. during your 60 day grace period is not allowed unless you have a pending or approved OPT. Please contact ISSS if you have any questions before you travel. If you are outside of the U.S. after your program end date and have not applied for OPT, you are no longer eligible to apply for OPT. For more information on OPT, please refer to our [Post-Completion OPT Policy Guide](#).

***Disclaimer:** International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) provides support and information related to U.S. immigration laws and regulations related to F and J status at the University of Utah. ISSS staff are not attorneys and any information provided by ISSS should not be construed as legal advice. Individuals are welcome to consult a qualified immigration attorney for specific legal advice, particularly in complicated cases. For a list of local Utah attorneys please visit our website [here](#).*

***Maintaining Status:** USCIS states that it is the student’s responsibility to understand the rules and regulations governing their visa [see 8 CFR 214.2(f)].*