

## OPT Frequently Asked Questions for Graduating Students at Idaho State University

1. **What is OPT?** OPT stands for Optional Practical Training.
2. **When can I apply for OPT?** You can apply for part-time (PT) OPT anytime during your degree, however, you only receive 12 months full-time (FT) OPT for **each degree level**. Most students wait until their final semester of course work or dissertation/thesis writing to apply. If you choose to use PT OPT, then it will count against the remaining FT OPT.
3. **Do I need a job before applying for OPT?** No
4. **How long does it take after I apply?** You can expect to wait between 90-120 days for your EAD to arrive.
5. **When is the last day to apply for OPT?** Effective in 2003, the immigration service center that processes **OPT must have the application for OPT (form I-765) and all the supporting documents by the last day of final exams**. That means ISU's deadline for applying for OPT is **10 days before the last day of final exams** or it cannot be guaranteed to be processed on time.
6. **Why do I have to see the DSO before I mail my OPT application?** When you apply for OPT, you must obtain a new I-20, which reflects the new graduation date and the requested OPT dates. Your application will be rejected by immigration if it does not include a new I-20. **That is why you must apply at a minimum 10 days before the last day of final exams!**
7. **How long is my OPT valid for?** You must use your OPT within 14 months of graduation. That means if you graduate in May, you have until July of the following year to complete your OPT. If your graduation date is 15 May 2007, your OPT must end by 15 July 2008.
8. **Can I extend OPT?** No. You receive 12 months, for each degree level and cannot apply for an extension beyond the 12 months.
9. **How much does it cost?** Effective May 1, 2004, the cost to apply is \$180.
10. **If I have my OPT, can I take classes?** Yes. Some schools will not allow you to register if you have your OPT, but ISU does. As long as you are working, or actively looking for a job, then you can take classes incidental to your degree. If you begin a new degree program and are issued a new I-20, then your OPT is cancelled.
11. **Can they deny my application?** It is unlikely that your OPT application will be denied as long as you have maintained status, not worked illegally, submitted the required documentation, signed your application and can prove that you will have a valid passport *for the duration* of your OPT.

12. **Do I have to register for an OPT class at ISU while I am on OPT?** The answer is yes because we have to continue to track you in SEVIS for the duration of your OPT. The index number to register for is: Spring semester: 213016; Fall semester: 113369 and Summer term: 313369. You must register for the entire semester, regardless of the beginning and ending dates of your OPT. You must register for each semester in which you have been granted OPT. The class fee is \$20 each semester. If you do not register by the fee payment deadline, you will be automatically registered for the class after the fee payment deadline and will be responsible for all late fees assessed by the university. This is a zero credit class.
13. **Do I have to update my address in MyISU Portal while on OPT?** Yes. Since we have to track you for SEVIS purposes, then you must update your addresses (mailing AND physical) within 10 days of moving as per immigration law.
14. **Can I have more than 12 months of OPT?** You qualify for a new round of OPT after completing a higher degree LEVEL than the prior one. The same conditions apply.
15. **Can I travel outside of the US while my OPT application is pending?** It's always risky to travel while your application is pending. ISU recommends against travel while your application is pending. Plan accordingly.
16. **Can I travel outside the US once I have my EAD (employment authorization document)?** All travel outside the US while on OPT can be risky, but the risk can be minimized if you plan accordingly: be sure you have a valid visa, a valid I-20, a valid passport and travel with a letter from your employer that states the condition of your employment and any vacation / travel benefit you have. **Be sure page 3 of your most recent I-20 is signed by the DSO for re-entry.**
17. **If my visa expires during my OPT is that OK?** Yes; remember that US visas are valid for ENTRY into the US only. Your I-94 card marked D/S and your valid I-20 show that you are legal to remain in the US. If you travel outside the US and need to apply for a new visa, it could be denied on the basis that you are not a student any longer.
18. **It says the I-765 can be submitted on-line. Should I use that option?** This is an option for you, but ISU recommends that, since you must send in all the supporting documentation, it's just as easy to mail the I-765 with the entire package. That way your application is all together.
19. **When my OPT is finished, do I have to leave the US immediately?** No, as an F1 student in good standing, you have 60 days after the last day of your OPT to 1) obtain a new I-20 for a new degree program 2) apply for a change of your immigration status (i.e. to H1-B) or 3) prepare to leave the US