

CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT) FOR F-1 STUDENTS

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is only available to F-1 students who have not graduated and who have been enrolled on a fulltime basis for one full academic year (i.e. fall and spring.) Full time is at least 12 semester hours per semester. Degree program requiring off campus employment before meeting this one full academic year requirement may be eligible for CPT.

CPT – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Can I get CPT authorization first and then find a job?

No. CPT work authorization is granted for a specific employer and for a specific period of time, usually corresponding to a semester.

2. Do I need to be enrolled while doing my CPT?

Your program must require an internship/practicum OR you MUST earn academic credit for your CPT, even if your CPT is during the summer term.

3. Can I be employed full-time while on CPT?

Students may apply for: Full-time CPT during an annual vacation period or Part-time CPT (no more than 20 hours per week) during an academic semester. Exceptions can be made if the student is not required to attend classes but is required to complete a full-time internship in order to meet their academic program requirements.

4. Do I have to pay for CPT work authorization?

If a student has a job offer and meets the eligibility requirements for CPT, authorization is given on a new I-20 form, and no additional employment authorization document from US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is required. Note: You may be required to pay for the internship course units. Consult your academic department about billing from Student Accounts.

5. I heard that Curricular Practical Training is any off-campus job. Is that true?

No. CPT is employment that is an integral part of an established curriculum and is directly related to the student's major area of study. CPT is not meant to facilitate the creation of a special employment opportunity. If the primary goal is practical work experience rather than an academic pursuit, apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT). CPT opportunities include internship or cooperative education arranged with the approval of your academic program that will be part of your program's curriculum.

6. I have a great internship opportunity. Can I start working tomorrow?

No. You must have authorization from the Office for Global Engagement before you begin a paid internship or any other form of curricular practical training. You need to get a new SEVIS I-20 issued by Noora, the International Student Advisor which is endorsed with curricular practical training authorization before your start working on your internship.

7. I am working this summer at "Company X," and Office for Global Engagement approved my CPT until the end of the summer term. How can I get it approved so that I can work through the end of Fall semester?

Students may be authorized for CPT only one semester at a time. Students should consult with Noora to determine if CPT in a subsequent semester is possible.

8. The company where I will be doing my summer internship wants me to turn in the CPT approval ASAP. I am not enrolled for summer yet. Can you approve my summer CPT?

No. It is a requirement to be enrolled in the semester of the CPT experience prior to CPT authorization.

9. My academic department does not want to recommend CPT. In this case, can I still apply?

No. It is required that your academic department and advisor approve this CPT. An academic advisor, department head, or dean must complete the attached recommendation form to determine eligibility for CPT. You must be enrolled for at least a 3 unit course that requires a work experience (such as co-op, internship or practicum) or be enrolled in a degree program that requires an internship/practicum. This type of training requires supervision by a faculty member and must be listed in the university course catalog.

10. My professor got me this job with "Company X." It is a nice opportunity for me to do research there. It will give me experience for after graduation. Can I do CPT there?

No. CPT cannot be approved based on it being a good opportunity alone. CPT is only authorized when the employment is part of the curriculum for your program. The Office for Global Engagement will recommend for these types of experiences that are not required by your academic program to apply for OPT. It can take 2-3 months to receive OPT authorization. Note: Both CPT and OPT are for jobs in your major field of study.

11. Can I do full-time CPT and still be eligible for OPT?

Maybe. If you participate in 12 months or more of full-time CPT you are not eligible to apply for OPT. However, if you participate in fewer than 12 months of full-time CPT, you may still use all 12 months of OPT. Part-time (20 hours or less per week) CPT does not affect your eligibility for OPT.

12. Can I have CPT after I finish my studies and during my grace period?

No. You can only do a CPT while you are an enrolled student. Students are not eligible for CPT once they have completed all course requirements for the degree except in certain cases, for example PhD students who will be collecting data for a thesis or dissertation and are required to have work authorization to obtain necessary data.

13. Do I have to apply for CPT if I am offered volunteer work or an unpaid internship?

International student in nonimmigrant status may participate in volunteer internships without work authorization. If you will be compensated in some way for the service you are providing, you must have employment authorization. Compensation includes money, lodging, meals, transportation, gift certificates, or other remuneration for services. The Office for Global Engagement generally recommends that students obtain CPT authorization for all unpaid/volunteer internships in case funding becomes available later, to apply for a Social Security number, or to use the experience on a resume or CV. Please consult Noora before engaging in a volunteer or unpaid internship.

14. What do I show my employer so that they know that I have work authorization?

You will present your I-20 with the CPT authorization notation. The authorization can be found on the 3rd page of your I-20.

15. Will I get a new I-20 for CPT? If yes, which one (my original I-20 or new I-20) do I use for travel?

A new travel signature is included on the CPT I-20. Keep all previously-issued I-20s and present the CPT I-20 if reentering the US after a trip abroad.

16. What if my CPT is not near campus?

Remember, enrolled students in F-1 status must keep permanent (address in home country) and local address (US residential address) information current while in the US through the Office for Global Engagement. You can also update your US residential address through your MySRU portal. If you will be moving to a different city or state for your internship, you must update your address with the Office for Global Engagement before moving. You must remember to update your local address again when you return to SRU.

17. My major is “X” but my job offer is for a different field. Can I get count this as CPT?

No. CPT can only be used for jobs that are directly related to the major field of study.

Employment Related Information

Employment Eligibility Verification (I-9)

When you begin work, you and your employer must complete a form entitled “Employment Eligibility Verification” (IRS Form I-9) which verifies your eligibility to work in the US. The I-9 must be updated each time you receive a renewal of your work permission. This form requires you to document your identity and work authorization. For F-1 students, the most typical combination of documentation is: your passport, I-94 Departure Record, I-20, and EAD.

Social Security Number (SSN)

For payroll purposes, you will also need to provide your SSN. If you do not already have an SSN or if you have lost your card, take your passport, I-94 Departure Record, your I-20, a letter from the Office for Global Engagement and EAD to the Social Security Administration and apply for an SSN card. Note that your number will remain the same if you already had one.

Social Security Withholding and Other Taxes

In general, F-1 students who have been in the US fewer than five years are “non-residents for tax purposes” and are exempt from Social Security (FICA) and Medicare taxes. If you are a non-resident for tax purposes and your employer does withhold FICA, speak to your payroll office. You and your employer can refer to Internal Revenue Service Publication 519, “U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens” for additional information. Your earnings **are subject to applicable federal, state, and local taxes**. Tax returns must be filed on or before April 15 each year for the previous calendar year. The results of the filing will determine if any of the withheld income taxes can be refunded to you.