



Curricular Practical Training

International Students Services Office

Purpose

This handout is designed for students in F-1 status. It will provide you with information on the type of employment opportunity which the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) calls "Curricular Practical Training".

Definition of Curricular Practical Training

The Immigration Service defines "Curricular Practical Training" (CPT) as employment which is an integral or important part of your curriculum, including: Alternate work/study; internship, cooperative education, and any other type of required internship or practicum which is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school. According to USCIS, the word 'required' does not always limit this type of practical training to work experiences which are a required part of the curriculum.

Job Eligibility Requirements

To be considered Curricular Practical Training, the work must not only be related to your major field of study but must also be an integral or important part of your studies. Training which is required by your degree program always meets the requirements for CPT regardless of whether or not you receive academic credit for the employment experience and if it is an important part of your studies. If you have a training opportunity which involves employment, check with your International Student Services office to determine if it qualifies for Curricular Practical Training.

Student Eligibility Requirements

Employment Which Is A Required Part of Your Degree Program. If student has maintained lawful F-1 status and the proposed employment is a required part of your studies, you may apply for permission to engage in Curricular Practical Training. Undergraduate students must have completed nine months of full-time study to be eligible for any form of CPT.

Employment Which Is Not Required Part of Your Degree Program. In order to be eligible to apply for permission to work in a job which is not required of your program of study, you must be in lawful F-1 status and been in full-time student status for at least nine months. To qualify for CPT of nonrequired employment, the training must be for internship or academic credit (which associates the work with academic needs).

Part-time vs Full-time Curricular Practical Training

Part-time Training. Employment for 20 hours or less per week while you are enrolled in classes is considered 'part-time' CPT. The employment authorization is therefore specifically limited to 20 hours per week or less. Working more than 20 hour per week on part-time Curricular Practical Training would be considered a violation of your work authorization. CPT is a term by term authorization with a specific starting date and ending date. Renewal eligibility is subject to resubmission of recommendation and proof of your course or internship requirements to



continue. You must be enrolled simultaneously (full-time) in order to maintain lawful status. Summer internships may be authorized without full-time enrollment as long as the employment meets the criteria for CPT.

Full-time Training. Employment for more than 20 hours per week is considered 'full-time' CPT and the employment authorization should, in this case, specify permission to participate in 'full-time' training. Anything above 21 hours per week would be considered full-time for immigration purposes, though the employer may not classify it that way. While in full-time training, you would still need to be maintain your enrollment requirements (full-time during regular academic term) to maintain your legal F-1 status. There is a maximum of 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training and it is a term by term authorization. If you exceed 12 months, then you would lose the option for Optional Practical Training for the Associates level.

Important Note: Curricular Practical Training is a term by term authorization. The authorization appears on the 3rd page of your I20 with a specific authorization period. You cannot begin employment before the starting date nor continue beyond the ending date. You must renew authorization to continue. Failure to comply with these requirements can result in a termination of your employment and your legal status.

Application Procedures

You should contact the International Student Services office (ISSO) so that they may evaluate your situation and the proposed employment opportunity to make certain that both you and the job meet the eligibility requirements. You will need the following information to apply for CPT:

- Offer letter from employer on employer letterhead, stated number of hours per week, starting and ending date of employment, location, and a brief job description.
- Recommendation form completed by program advisor or academic advisor

The ISS office will assess your eligibility for CPT and either authorize part-time or full-time CPT.

Social Security and Employment Eligibility Verification

If you do not already possess a Social Security number, then you would need to take you work authorization I-20 along with you passport, I-94, and visa (or I-797 approval notice for those with a change of status) to the main downtown Birmingham Social Security office. With this authorization you can apply for the SSN. You would present the I-20 with the authorization on the 3rd page to your employer for them to complete an I-9 form. Employment in the U.S. is subject to taxation and reporting, as such be prepare to file a tax return at the end of the year for your work declaration. (www.irs.gov)

