

Frequently Asked Questions: Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

What is “CPT”?

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is temporary authorization for practical training directly related to your major field of study. "Practical training" can include, but is not limited to, employment, internship experience (paid or unpaid), cooperative (co-op) education experience, and practicum participation. CPT is authorized by your university's international office in accordance with F-1 regulations. You can apply for CPT during the regular academic year, but must remain registered full-time, and during your annual vacation quarter or semester.

Who is eligible for CPT?

To be eligible for CPT, you must meet the following criteria:

- You must have completed one academic year of full-time study in valid F-1 student status. Graduate students may be eligible for CPT before completing one academic year if the degree program requires immediate participation in an internship.
- You must have an offer of employment for work that qualifies for CPT.
- You must be able to demonstrate, through formal documentation, that the employment is required for the degree program or a specific course. If the employment is required for a course, you must document that you will receive academic credit.

According to immigration regulations, to qualify for CPT the employment must be either:

- **Required by the degree program**, such that CPT is available where the employment is a required part of the degree program for all students, regardless of whether academic credit is awarded. The requirement must be formally documented.
- **Required by a course for academic credit**, such that CPT is available where the employment is required by a specific course for academic credit. The requirement must be formally documented in the course catalog. The course must be taken for academic credit during the same term that the employment takes place.

How many hours per week can I work with CPT?

CPT may be part-time (20 hours per week or less) or full-time (more than 20 hours per week). If you accumulate 12 months of full-time CPT authorization, you lose your eligibility for Optional Practical Training (OPT), another type of employment authorization for F-1 students. Part-time CPT and fewer than 12 months of full-time CPT authorization does not affect your OPT eligibility.

Can I change employers?

Since CPT is employer-specific you must apply for a new CPT authorization before you work for the new employer.

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Can I change the number of hours I work?

You can change within the limits of working part-time or full-time. For example, if working part-time you may change from 10 hours per week to 15 hours per week without a new authorization. However, if you change from part-time to full-time (or vice versa) you must request a new authorization.

How do I apply for CPT?

Please contact the international office of your university. They will be able to direct you to the necessary forms and explain the application process to you.

Do I need a Social Security number?

Yes, you will need a Social Security number in order to receive payment from your employer.

Can I extend my CPT?

Since you are authorized for specific dates of employment on your I-20, you may not begin before the start date or continue after the end date. You must apply for an extension with sufficient time to allow your international adviser to issue a new CPT authorization before you can continue beyond the end date of your current CPT.

What is the difference between Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

CPT is employment that is an integral part of your major curriculum and allows you to participate in an internship, practicum, or cooperative education program. CPT must be required or, if not required, you must receive course credit. CPT is employer specific and must be done before you graduate. OPT is optional for any student who meets the eligibility requirements and you do not need to earn credit. OPT is not employer specific and may be done before or after you graduate.

References:

Dartmouth College: <https://www.dartmouth.edu/~ovis/updates/fl/curricular.html>

University of Washington: <https://iss.washington.edu/employment/fl-employment/cpt>